

15 Sunday C

July 11, 2010

Cathedral

8:00 and 10:00

Theme: Might it be that only when *we* are broken, “half dead” on the side of the road, and Jesus ministers to us as our Good Samaritan, that we then see those also in their brokenness and show ourselves as neighbor?

“The Samaritan was moved with compassion at the sight...poured oil and wine over his wounds...and cared for him.”

Twice before, on Sundays at the Cathedral, I’ve preached on this Gospel. Twice I’ve cajoled us to see the one who languishes on the side of the road and show that we are truly neighbor through our love.

I’m not going to do that this time.

I suggest that, until we *experience* in one way or another what it’s like to be beaten up, left half-dead (in our soul if not our body), and rotting on the side of the road—well, we won’t really see those others who are suffering, and we won’t really love them as our neighbor. The bad guys in Jesus’ story—the priest and the Levite: well, they were too antiseptic, that is, they had to be ritually pure. They couldn’t get dirty. I bet the priest and Levite had their lives together. I bet they had never really failed in anything significant—hadn’t lost a job, hadn’t had a marriage or relationship in trouble or fail. I bet the priest and Levite had never felt broken. They observed the victim, beaten and left half-dead, and had to get somewhere important. Actually, they really didn’t *see* him.

Sisters and brothers: Each of us has had to have *experienced* Jesus pouring the oil of divine mercy over the wounds of our sins and brokenness. We’ve got to experience him loving us precisely in those dimensions of our lives where we don’t have it together, where it’s not packaged neatly. By becoming himself the outcast on the cross, he has bandaged the unhealed sores of our guilt and self-loathing. Indeed, he has **“reconciled all things, making peace by the blood of his cross,”** (Colossians 1:20) and has carried us to the emergency room, the E.R. for outcasts, that is, the church. First of all, Christ Jesus made himself the Good Samaritan for us in our brokenness.

I suggest that ministers to the sick really can't do that ministry unless they've known the pain of illness themselves or have had a loved one suffer—and they've felt the anxiety and anguish. We priests really can't be confessors in the Sacrament of Penance until we've been brought to our knees, and we know guilt like King David who admitted in his psalm, **“my sin is always before me”** (51:3). We citizens might not identify with immigrants in our midst—legal or not—unless we've experienced what it's like really to be a stranger unwelcomed.

You see, it was the despised one, the Samaritan—a half-breed who really knew what it was like to be broken: when he saw the guy beaten up by the robbers, the Gospel said he was **“moved with compassion.”** Literally, it meant that the scene of suffering **“was eating at his inner parts.”** (1)

That's why Jesus loves us so much. Taking on our flesh, he became for us **“a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity”** (Isaiah 53:3). Jesus sees the anguish of our world—and ours, too—when we are beaten in one way or another, and it **“eats at his inner parts.”** Let's allow him to be our Good Samaritan, pouring the oil of divine love over our wounds.

Then, in gratitude, “Go and do likewise.”

(1) See Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), pg. 1067.