

## **BIBLE STUDY**

**July 8, 2019**

### **THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

**Deuteronomy 30: 10-14**

**Luke 10: 25-37**

**Colossians 1: 15-20**

#### **1. Deuteronomy 30: 10-14**

- The Book of Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Old Testament—the last book of the Pentateuch (Torah/Law). It summarizes the law presented in the other books of the Pentateuch. Its structure is of three long sermons of Moses in which he urges the Israelites to be successful by making the right choice. They must choose by loving God and obeying his commandments or following other gods. Moses puts before them a “blessing” and a “curse.” That choice will determine the kind of life they will have.
- The selection to be read this Sunday comes from Moses’ third address to the Israelites. Moses reminds the Israelites of the favors of the Lord as they journeyed through the desert and conquered the Promised Land. He recalls that God has made a covenant with them. They are warned against idolatry—following other gods. The punishment for idolatry will be severe like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. If the people turn back to God after they sin, he will welcome them back and restore the blessings of the covenant.
- 10: Returning to the Lord is not just a slavish obedience to rules and regulations but a restoration of a personal relationship with God. It is a return “with your whole heart and your whole being.”
- 11-14: “With a series of negatives, Moses dismisses the idea that the Law is impossible for people to understand; it is not too mysterious, not remote, not up in the sky, not across the sea. God’s law is so near that it is in the people’s speech and in their hearts. If they listen attentively to God’s voice today and follow God’s commandments, they will thrive in the land of promise.” (Lector’s Workbook, p 213)
- “in your mouth” = memorized and recited like in Dt. 6:7-“Keep reciting them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.”
- In your heart: internalized and made your own

#### **2. Luke 10: 25-37**

- In last Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus introduced the idea of eternal life by telling the disciples that they should rejoice because their names are written in heaven. This story picks up on that theme by the question of the lawyer regarding what he must do to inherit eternal life.

- The lawyer was an expert in the law of Moses which encompassed both religious and civil life. There is a challenge in the lawyer's question of Jesus. He seems to suspect that Jesus may have a different interpretation of the law. He wants to expose that difference.
- Jesus throws the question back on the lawyer and asks him what the law says. The lawyer responds with the two great commandments that links love of God with love of neighbor. It seems that Jesus is perfectly orthodox.
- The lawyer wants to "justify himself." He wants to show off and challenge Jesus more. He asks Jesus, 'Who is my neighbor?' The lawyer seems to want to limit who qualifies as neighbor. He is seeking out the minimum requirement of the law.
- Jesus tells the famous parable of the Good Samaritan. Only Luke tells this parable. The combination of "good" and "Samaritan" over the centuries robs us of the shock of the combination of two words would have had in Jesus' time. In our day, it would be like "the good terrorist" or "the good drug dealer."
- Jesus prepares the listeners for a pattern. The man who has been robbed and beaten and is lying on the side of the road encounters three persons as they pass by. The first two are clerics: a priest and a Levite. They see him but pass by on the other side of the road. If they touched him that would render them impure that would prevent them from carrying out their religious duties. That is the Law—Jesus is working to a different understanding of the Law.
- It would seem that the third person to pass by will act differently—maybe stop and help. The listeners might expect it to be a Jewish layman—and then the story would have an anti-clerical focus. They would be totally surprised by a Samaritan doing the right thing. When they hear the word "Samaritan" they would have presumed that he will pass by also or rob or kill the poor man.
- On the contrary this Samaritan gives a lavish display of compassion and generosity. He is moved with compassion. He not only attends to his immediate needs but he makes provision for his future care. He brings him to an inn and provides funds for his care.
- Remember, how when the Samaritan towns rejected Jesus, James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven. Jesus said that is not how we do things. Now, Jesus uses a Samaritan as an example of right behavior and obedience to the law.
- Jesus asks the Samaritan: "Who was neighbor?" There is a subtle reversal of the use of neighbor. The lawyer's question was asked in a restrictive sense—to whom am I required to be a neighbor. Jesus leads the lawyer to an expansive definition of neighbor—to whom can I be a neighbor—to whom can I show mercy? To whoever is in need. Neighbor becomes a quality or a vocation that I take upon myself and act out.
- Jesus also invites us to identify with the man who was beaten and robbed. He asks us to change our frame of reference from concern about self—

what will happen to me if I stop? Will I be robbed also? Will I be defiled by contact with an almost dead person? The question becomes: What will happen to me if I do not stop? Will I inherit eternal life?

- God offers the same hospitality and "neighborliness." He reaches out to wounded and half-dead humanity and provides immediate and long term healing and care. The way to inherit eternal life is to join God in offering this same healing hospitality to God's children.

### 3. Colossians 1: 15-20

- Paul had never visited Colossae (in modern day Turkey). The local church there was founded by Epaphras. As often happened teachers came to Colossae and began to teach the people about angels and spirits in the universe who also share a role in salvation with Christ. They taught the Colossians that they had to appease the spirits by practices in food and drink. Epaphras called on Paul's help to set the Colossians straight. Paul wrote to them from prison. He insisted on Christ Jesus as the only source of salvation and redemption. Jesus was superior to any angel or other spiritual being.
- After a prayer of thanksgiving, Paul quotes an ancient Christian hymn that was probably used in baptismal ceremonies.
- 15: Christ is the image of the invisible God. He makes God visible to us. He is the human face of God.
- 16: Christ is the summit of creation. He himself was not created but everything was created through him. All angels and spiritual beings were created through him. He is superior to them.
- 17: He is before all things. Nothing is in competition with him. He holds all things together in unity.
- 18: He is the head of the body, the church—he is the absolute first and foremost. Since he was the first born of the dead, the first to rise from the dead, we receive resurrection from him. He is the absolute first without any rival.
- Fullness: could be the fullness of God's divinity. God is equally divine with the father and the Spirit. It could also be referring to the fullness of grace which we receive in Christ.
- Christ made peace by reconciling all things in himself through the blood of the Cross. Christ has brought unity and peace. There is no rivalry among the spiritual world. Christ has complete control. Paul's mention of the blood of the Cross brings Jesus' role down to earth. The false teachers of Colossae would have liked to downplay flesh and blood and emphasize the spiritual.