

SCREEN: family in front of TV watching man walk on the moon

ME: Fifty years ago this week - *July 20th to be exact* -

man landed on the moon.

In the summer of 1969 I was ten years old and obsessed with space travel.

I bought model rockets, read every magazine about the Apollo program I could find and fantasized of being an astronaut.

But when the big moment came to watch a man walk on the moon....

I fell asleep.

Now, in my defense, it was 11pm, and we'd been gathered around the TV set literally all day, and did I mention I was ten years old?

What I most remember about the lunar landing was how excited everyone was.

And I mean *everyone*.

SCREEN: Footprint on the moon

It's estimated that 600 million people around the world watched

Neil Armstrong take that first step.

And in that moment, it didn't matter what nationality or race or religion you were.

This was a giant leap for humanity.

WE: A lot has changed in 50 years and not all of it for the better.

Our world seems more divided than ever.

The boundaries that disappeared on July 20, 1969 are back.

And with them comes hatred, mistrust, and division.

We've lost that sense that we're all in this together.

Can we get it back?

SCREEN: The Classics main screen

We're continuing our message series titled, The Classics.

This summer we are hearing some classic bible stories,

ones we first heard as kids but have heard many times over the years.

In the Gospel today, Jesus told a story of what it looks like when

we see one another as brothers and sisters.

Let's jump in.

SCREEN: blank red background

GOD: The story of the Good Samaritan

is one of Jesus' best known stories; it's classic.

Some background will help you

better understand this story.

In Jesus' day, walking was necessary to get anywhere.

The average person didn't own a horse or chariot,

so walking was the only option.

But walking any distance could be dangerous for lots of reasons.

The climate was hot and dry,

roads were rough, wild animals roamed the countryside,

and robbers would hide along the roads looking for an easy mark.

People tried to travel in groups for safety,

but this wasn't always possible.

Now, the journey that Jesus described in the story,

from Jerusalem to Jericho, was an 18 mile walk.

It would take a healthy person the better part of a day.

The man in Jesus' story was not out for

a stroll or to take in some fresh air;

he was heading home when he was viciously attacked;

stripped, beaten, and left for dead.

Everyone in Jesus' audience would have been able to relate to his story.

They'd all hope that if this happened to them,

somebody would come and save them.

The first person to come upon the victim was a Jewish priest.

Jesus' listeners would automatically presume that

a Jewish priest would stop and help.

Being told he was coming from Jerusalem was

Jesus' way of saying he had just worshipped in the temple,

offered sacrifice; stood in the presence of the Almighty.

But now he's back in the real world,
where roads are dangerous,
robbers exist and the innocent are
beaten and left for dead.

The priest took one look at the man lying there,
crossed to the other side of the road and kept on going.

Jewish law requires every person to help
those who are dying so there was no excuse for the priest to do what he did.

Sadly he saw no contradiction between
his earlier actions in the temple in Jerusalem and
his inaction on the road to Jericho.

Next a Levite came along, an assistant in the temple.

But just like the priest, he crossed the road
and kept going. Again, no excuse!

Finally someone came along who went above and beyond the call of duty.

Here is what Jesus said he did:

SCREEN: He approached the victim,
poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them.

Then he lifted him up on his own animal,
took him to an inn, and cared for him.

The next day he took out two silver coins and
gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction,

*Take care of him. If you spend more than
what I have given you, I shall repay you on
my way back.'*

Who was this hero?

A Samaritan.

The absolute last person anyone listening to Jesus
would have expected to do the right thing.

And that's because Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies.

They hated each other because they were from different countries,
races and religions.

But the Samaritan in the parable did not see an enemy lying by the side of the road.
He saw a fellow human being in need and was moved with compassion.

Not just *moved with compassion*...he **acted** *with compassion*
for a complete stranger, a foreigner.

With this classic story, Jesus is presenting the Samaritan as
the model of love of neighbor.

He overcame his prejudice, and bigotry to show mercy and compassion.

He is the “outsider” who fulfilled the law.

And what was Jesus’ instruction to the lawyer he told this story to?

SCREEN: Go and do likewise.

Go and do likewise.

Jesus is teaching that the true measure of a person’s faith
is the sacrifices made for those in need.

Disciples can’t worship God in church and then go out
and treat others with indifference or worse, with hatred.

We don’t have a law commanding us to do this,
we have something greater: the command of Christ to ‘go and do likewise’.

Followers find their identity in Jesus.

YOU: Now, I want you to put yourself in this classic story of faith.

Answer the question, what would you do?

Would you have averted your eyes like the priest and Levite?

Just passed the victim by and told yourself:

“It’s not my problem, I’m not getting involved, let someone else help.”???

Or would you have been like the Samaritan?

Would you have stopped and helped and saved a life?

Indifference or involvement?

Coldness or compassion?

Inaction or action?

Let's be honest and admit that many of us - myself included at times -
would just as soon not get involved.

And that's because involvement is risky; it requires sacrifice and can be messy.
Not many people would do what the Samaritan did.

He went 'all in' for the victim:

bandaged his wounds, lifted him onto his animal,
took him to an inn, paid for his care and followed up later.

His commitment was astonishing.

But beyond the sacrifice that such a response requires,

I think there is something else that keeps people from acting like the Samaritan.

And it's the trap of deciding that some people are unworthy
or undeserving of help.

People can have this attitude towards the homeless, the sick or
towards refugees or migrants.

Maybe we think, *"it's their fault they're in trouble. They made bad choices."*

Or, *"if they just used better judgement or followed the rules, they wouldn't need help."*

And the reason this is a trap is that it leads to playing judge and jury with the lives of others.

This past week, our Holy Father, Pope Francis talked about the obligation
to care for the sick and abandoned who are left to die.

Here's what he said...

**SCREEN: A society is human if it protects life, every life, from its beginning to its
natural end, without choosing who is worthy to live or who is not. -Pope Francis**

In other words, to avoid the pitfalls of the Jewish priest and the Levite in the story,
we have to let go of trying to figure out who deserves our help and who doesn't.

When we let go, we are freed up to respond as true disciples.

Jesus is calling his followers to be like the Samaritan:

to love in unexpected ways.

He's challenging us to see the enemy, the foreigner, the stranger in our midst
and not turn away from them but to go toward them,
choosing action, involvement and compassion.

And when more people who call themselves Christians live like Christ,
the world is made over in God's image.

Boundaries disappear.

We stop treating each other as different, and see our common humanity
and the Kingdom of God grows.

This week a group of people from area parishes
are in Honduras providing medical care for some of the neediest people in the world.
They are distributing supplies many of you donated.

It's one powerful example of how to be a
good Samaritan and a true disciple.

You can also help with our Sharing Pantry.

We always need donations to feed our hungry brothers and sisters here in Bowie.
There are endless ways to be a good Samaritan here at the parish,
in our community and in our world.

We do a great job making you aware of opportunities,
but you have to take the step; you have to act.

I challenge you this week to help someone who is hurting and in need.

WE: So to get back to that question I asked at the beginning,
'can our world ever experience the unity we felt in July 1969?'

The answer is "yes", and here's how:

we leave here deciding that we are responsible for one another.

We are all God's children, sharing one world where everyone is our neighbor.

We ask the Lord remove from us any indifference, cold-heartedness or apathy
and in its place, fill us with compassion,

a generous heart and the courage to love one another always. Amen. +