



Bringing Home the Word

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
March 3, 2019

Recognizing the Truth That Is in Our Hearts

By Hans Christoffersen

Our words and deeds say much about who we are, not only on the surface, but in our hearts. Carelessness in our words and actions can indicate a careless, unconcerned heart. A careless heart easily finds faults in others while remaining blind to its own failings. Jesus calls people with such attitudes “hypocrites.” *Hypocrisy* is a Greek word meaning “play acting,” that is, passing oneself off as someone other than who one really is.

To be real is to have a heart that

recognizes and accepts the truth about oneself. This is a humble, down-to-earth heart (*humility* is from the Latin “of the earth”), and close enough to ourselves to see our failings and limitations.

Do we know our own hearts? What fills our hearts: censure, criticism, judgment—or the goodness and humility that makes us realize we hardly know enough to judge anyone?

The gift of humility, then, is the way that we know our common bond in Christ and sustain the Church community. This happens in our prayer, but also in situations seemingly removed from pious intent. Some years ago, an American family vacationing in Italy lost their only son in a traffic accident. The parents decided to donate his organs, and their decision to have his organs live on in Italy received great attention in a nation where, until then, organ donation was very unusual.

Our Scriptures today tell us that these kinds of words and deeds say a lot about who we are—not on the surface, but in our hearts. If God, who is down-to-earth, is our focus, we will see how goodness is the fruit of his humble love: “Therefore, my beloved...be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted to the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58). +

A Word from Pope Francis

When we go to Mass, perhaps we arrive five minutes early and begin to chat with the person next to us. But this is not the moment for small talk.... It is the moment for recollection within the heart, to prepare ourselves for the encounter with Jesus. Silence is so important!

—General audience,
November 15, 2017



Sunday Readings

Sirach 27:4-7

When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear; so do people’s faults when they speak....The test of a person is in conversation.

1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?

Luke 6:39-45

[Jesus said,] “Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own?”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- This week, can I meditate on what is truly in my heart?
- Is the goodness in my heart expressed in words and deeds?

The Good Businessman



By Gregory F. Augustine Pierce

“A businessman was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho for work when he encountered someone who had been mugged.” This might have been the opening to Jesus’ parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:29-37.

Yes, the hero was a Samaritan, the most hated ethnic group in Israel at the time. And yes, he was a layperson—not a priest or a Levite like the other two travelers on the road. Both of these facts about the main character are important story elements because Jesus was clearly trying to get his listeners to think outside the box.

Remember, this parable was Jesus’ response to the question, “Who is my neighbor?” When Jesus told a story about the member of a despised minority who was more kind and generous than the

Jewish priestly class, he was intending to provoke an audience reaction.

But it’s also possible that Jesus was using a person in the midst of his daily work to demonstrate what it means to love our neighbor. It’s not a big stretch to imagine the hero as a businessman. He is traveling alone on a dangerous stretch of road. He has a donkey and happens to be carrying olive oil and wine. He also has enough money to pay an innkeeper to take care of the man and promises that he will return soon. This certainly sounds like a person on the first leg of a business trip. Perhaps he was a dealer in olive oil or wine.

Values in the Workplace

In any case, the good Samaritan was most likely “at work” when he did his “good Samaritan-ing.” That is, he was probably on the job when he was called upon to help someone less fortunate than himself.

Work and the workplace in our culture are given a bum rap. The workplace is often portrayed as an awful setting where people constantly put others down, where competition is exclusively and excessively rewarded, where dog eats dog, and only the strong survive. Many assume there is little time in the midst of work for things like compassion, generosity, or going out of your way for others as the Samaritan did.

In many ways, work deserves some of this criticism. We often lose our focus on what is truly important in life as we strive to succeed in our careers. We get so preoccupied with the bottom line, the next promotion, getting a leg up, that we forget people are more important than profits, prestige, or power. We forget that

we are but stewards of resources we have been given.

Loving Thy Neighbor

The good Samaritan recognized all that, however, and did so in the midst of going about his business. He was on the road that morning precisely because he was working, but he kept his perspective even amid the hustle and bustle of his daily work. He encountered somebody who needed assistance. He stopped. He helped to the extent he could, given his time and resources. He then went about his business, returning later to see how things were going.

It’s precisely that kind of openness that Jesus is asking of us. When asked to identify what he meant by a neighbor, Jesus described a regular guy going about his daily work who somehow had time to love someone who needed help.

“Go and do the same,” Jesus told all of us, no matter what our occupation might be. That good businessman—in the midst of doing his own job and using resources from his own workplace—was Jesus’ example of what “love thy neighbor” looks like. +

PRAYER

Lord, you show me the pathway of goodness and truth. Help me to bear the fruit of love, compassion, and peace.

—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 4-9

Monday, Weekday: Sir 17:20–24 / Mk 10:17–27

Tuesday, Weekday: Sir 35:1–12 / Mk 10:28–31

Wednesday, Ash Wednesday: Jl 2:12–18 / 2 Cor 5:20–6:2 / Mt 6:1–6, 16–18

Thursday, Thursday after Ash Wednesday: Dt 30:15–20 / Lk 9:22–25

Friday, Friday after Ash Wednesday: Is 58:1–9a / Mt 9:14–15

Saturday, Saturday after Ash Wednesday: Is 58:9b–14 / Lk 5:27–32

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