

Love and Family

A sermon by the Rev. Deacon Juan Sandoval
The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 10, Year C

Good morning, neighbors!

Interestingly some of the first thoughts I had were lyrics from some songs that seemed to express the crux of today's gospel.

So, I paraphrased the songs of Sister Sledge and the Beatles: We are family. Love is all you need.

We are family
I got all my neighbors with me
We are family
Get up ev'rybody and sing
We are family
I got all my neighbors with me
We are family

There's nothing you can do that can't be done
Nothing you can sing that can't be sung
Nothing you can say, but you can learn
How to love all the same
It's easy

Nothing you can know that isn't known
Nothing you can see that isn't shown
There's nowhere you can be that isn't where
You're meant to be
It's easy

All you need is love
All you need is love
All you need is love, love
Love is all you need

These songs remind us of the core message in today's Gospel, which we see reflected in various aspects of our lives and experiences.

Two songs that seem to elaborate on the several questions asked in the Gospel this morning. A dichotomy of questions:

"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" This question figures prominently in our lives and the lives of many throughout the world and throughout time. The lawyer puts forth this question to Jesus, who in turn answers with a question. *"What is written in the Law?"* Then an answer: Love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). The lawyer then questions Jesus: *"And who is my neighbor?"*

So today we have a dichotomy between legalism and compassion.

Eternal Life is legally achieved by fulfilling the Law, eternal life compassionately is embodied through radical love

Who is my Neighbor, legally possibly limited to fellow Jews or those within one's social circle, compassionately, anyone in need, even a despised outsider, an enemy

Righteousness, legally defined by status, knowledge, or ritual purity, compassionately defined by love, mercy, action, and self-sacrifice.

During my life I have been to many countries and interacted with many different ethnic and religious groups. I had the opportunity to go to Haiti a few years ago. The mission was twofold: provide healthcare and serve the local churches. As a registered nurse and a deacon, I served in both capacities. Haiti was still in disrepair, this following some massive earthquakes that destroyed many of the buildings. I could see the workers repurposing some of the rubble. During this time, we provided three clinics on three different days in three different locations. Our team consisted of two physicians, a dentist, an optometrist, a nurse and a cadre of others who assisted in pharmacy and triage. We also were assisted by a Haitian doctor, nurse and nursing assistants. Over the course of the three clinics, we saw 900 patients. Most with common ailments, none with serious issues. The two most common issues were high blood pressure and heartburn.

On Sunday, I was asked to preach at one of Pere Kerwin's churches on a hill. This church was partially destroyed by the earthquake and the roof now consisted of tree branches and thatch. There was no air conditioning or fans. People came from far away for the Sunday service and it was special as they had two children to be baptized. People had walked up to four hours on foot to get to the service, some of them barefooted. That said, I was asked to preach and to baptize one of the children. Quite the honor. But what amazed me most was the wonderful spirit and love that filled that small church that morning. The faithful were hanging outside the church in order to be involved in the service. These people are our neighbors. They are almost always in need of help, and we were there to help and to love them. It was a mission of family and love.

This past Thanksgiving, I was invited to an interfaith service in Marietta at Temple Kol Emeth. It was a joyous service of love, community, and so many faiths. Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Christians of various beliefs. There were about 700 participants. Not only different religions, but also of many ethnicities. A wonderful example of working and loving together regardless of color or creed. That evening we were family, we were neighbors.

As I read the Gospel today, I find that it is a call to action for us. **A call to action** here in our community, across our country and the world. The Cathedral of St. Philip and Giving by Design are great examples of how we provide outreach to the community we live in. Each year focusing on a different charitable organization. We have also provided assistance to reduce or remove existing health care debt for people here in Peoples Town. There are organizations in our church and outside of our church that provide for the needs of the underserved, for those in need of shelter, for those with food insecurity, and for those in need of healthcare. The church has assisted those within our church and also outside of the church.

While the times have changed, the needs of our neighbors have not changed.

Homelessness and Poverty

Just like the wounded man on the road, many people today are ignored or avoided despite their visible suffering.

The parable challenges us to see and respond to those in need, even when it's inconvenient or uncomfortable.

Immigration and Refugees

The Samaritan was an outsider, yet he showed the deepest compassion.

This speaks to how we treat migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees—not as threats or burdens, but as our neighbors. These human beings deserve dignity and care.

Racial and Social Justice

The story critiques prejudice and systemic exclusion. Jews and Samaritans despised each other, yet Jesus made the Samaritan the neighbor.

It calls us to cross social, racial, and religious boundaries to show mercy and solidarity.

Everyday Compassion

Whether it's someone asking for help on the street, or a neighbor going through a crisis, the parable confronts our daily choices: **Will we pass by, or will we stop and care? What random acts of kindness are we called to provide?**

The Good Samaritan isn't just a moral parable — **it's a radical call to action**. It asks us not just to define who our neighbor is, but to become a neighbor to anyone in need, especially those we might otherwise ignore or judge. This is a parable that points to our baptismal vows, the same vows we repeat at baptisms and reminds us of how we are to treat and respect others. And perhaps in renewing our vows, we will honor our God and find eternal life.

*All the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness *
to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.*

How can we help our neighbors? Attend the Summer of Hope sessions on Sundays and connect with the various outreach programs. You may also assist by making sandwiches to feed the less fortunate at Common Ground or Holy Comforter. There are many opportunities to serve listed on our Cathedral website.

Let us go into the world and do likewise

We are family and all we need is love.

AMEN