Who Is My Neighbor?
A Deep Dive into the Parable of the Good Samaritan

March 20-April 10, 2022

John 13:34-35

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone should know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” NRSV
Matthew 7:12
“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." NRSV

Overview

This series runs Sunday March 20 through Sunday April 10. The classes will wrestle with two main meanings of this challenging parable. First, what did Jesus mean when the parable raises the challenge to love thy neighbor? Who then is my neighbor? Second, Jesus brings attention to the mercy the Samaritan displayed. What is God’s mercy and how is it to be expressed in our lives today? Over four Sundays presenters from various faith backgrounds will share their understanding of what is involved in love and mercy for my neighbor.

Biblical Texts

Leviticus 19:17-18
There is much more to discuss in Leviticus but here are two versions:

English Standard Version

17 “You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”

New International Version

17 “Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. 18 “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”
Luke 10:25-37

New International Version

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

27 He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’”

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”
Luke 10:25-37
Revised Standard Version

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” 26 He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read?” 27 And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” 28 And he said to him, “You have answered right; do this, and you will live.”

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” 30 Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, 34 and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” 37 He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” And Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”
Outline of the Series

Sunday, March 20, 2022
Time: Noon - 1:15PM
Luncheon will be served beginning at 11:45AM

“Perspectives on the Parable: A Conversation from Three Traditions”

Presenters: Pastor Rick Reiten, Trinity Lutheran Church, Rector Felicia SmithGraybeal of St. Pauls Episcopal, Rabbi Sally Finestone, Congregation Har Shalom

The session will be conducted: in-person and Zoom.

Sunday, March 27, 2022
Time: 9:00 -10:00AM

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Walter Wagner, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Respect Graduate School and Moravian Theological Seminary, Bethlehem, PA.

His most recent book is entitled: Opening the Qur’an: Introducing Islam’s Holy Book

Dr. Wagner will discuss the historical context of the parable and draw connections to the Islamic faith.

The session will be conducted in-person and Zoom.
Sunday, April 3, 2022
Time: 9:00 -10:00AM

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Meghan Aelabouni, Theologian in Residence, Middle East and North Africa Desk, ELCA. Jerusalem, Israel.

Dr. Aelabouni will discuss the current understanding(s) of the parable and draw connections with current events in the Middle East and Ukraine.

The session will be conducted in-person and Zoom.

Sunday, April 10, 2022
Time: 9:00 -10:00AM

Presenter: David Lindwall, U. S. Department of State (Ret.)

Mr. Lindwell will discuss examples of occasions on which mercy has been shown and withheld in different cultures.

Small group discussions will explore this question.

The session will be conducted in-person and Zoom.
"It is an attribute to God himself; and earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice.” William Shakespeare

“I’ve always found that mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice”
Abraham Lincoln