

Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor

August 16, 2020

Lesson 11

Who Is My Neighbor?

Luke 10:25-37

By Belton Joyner

This week's text is a familiar story, but I wonder if its familiarity also includes an unintentional put-down of "another people." Jesus celebrates the good deed done by the Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35). Jesus invites the legal expert (and us) to show that kind of mercy and kindness (Luke 10:37). Jesus tells how the Samaritan has been a loving neighbor (verses 27, 29). But Jesus does not call the Samaritan "good." That is an adjective our tradition has added to describe the man.

What's wrong with that? Think about it. What is the implied smear if we were to describe an immigrant, for example, as "a good immigrant"? The implication would be that most immigrants are not good. Maybe I am chasing a rabbit here, but I do think our prejudice reveals itself sometimes in subtle ways.

It is interesting how many verbs it takes to depict what all the Samaritan did to help the injured man: came (verse 33) , saw (verse 33), was moved (verse 33), went (verse 34), bandaged (verse 34), tending (verse 34), placed (verse 34), took (verse 34), took care (verse 34) , took (verse 35), gave (verse 35), said (verse 35), take care (verse 35), return (verse 35), repay you (verse 35).

It is also interesting to note how many things and people were employed in being a neighbor to the injured man: bandage (verse 34), oil (verse 34), wine (verse 34), donkey (verse 34), inn (verse 34), wages (verse 35), innkeeper (verse 35).

Fortunately for us today, Jesus simply says "Go and do likewise" (verse 37). This means you and I are off the hook unless we happen to be walking between Jerusalem and Jericho; otherwise, how could we do "likewise"? *You know that's not right!* Our Lord lets us know that all of us will walk/ride/see/hear/think/touch places where there is desperate need for a neighbor. Then, we go and do.

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Help me hear Jesus, O Lord..."

Belton Joyner is a retired elder in the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. He has served in a variety of local church and connectional responsibilities. His publications range from church school curriculum to theology popularization to mystery novels. He has written these weekly thoughts on the lessons in Adult Bible Studies for his conference newsletter since December 2001. They are printed here with permission.