

Mora/Ogilvie UMC

June 27, 2021

Prelude

Welcome

***Call to Worship**

Leader: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus Christ.

People: Let us go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

Leader: Let us baptize the nations;

People: Let us baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Leader: Let us obey all that Christ has commanded.

People: Let us teach all that Christ has commanded.

Leader: Remember, Christ is with us always;

All: Christ is with us to the end of the age.

***Opening Prayer**

Jesus, our Savior, in response to your call to be your faithful disciples, we are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Open our lives and teach us how to follow your great commission to make disciples of all nations, to baptize and teach them your ways. Let us know the full blessings of our God— Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen

***Hymn**

UMH # 454

Open My Eyes, That I May See

Scripture

Luke 10:25-37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

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."

And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead."

Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.

He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'

Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Meditation Traveling the Jericho Road

Do you have a faith hero?

Caring For Others is a story taken from a book titled Profiles in Faith written by Harold Sala. I enjoy reading short pieces about the lives of others. The story I am going to share is about a gentlemen names Doug Nichols.

Doug Nichols describes it as "what seminary can't teach". It's one of the lessons learned in the school of experience, otherwise described as "the school of hard knocks." In 1967, Doug, who today heads a Christian mission known as Action International Ministries, was serving as a missionary in India. When he contacted tuberculosis, he was eventually sent to a sanitarium to recuperate.

Though he was living on no more than the nationals who also were hospitalized in the government sanitarium, people thought because he was an American, he had to be rich.

While he was hospitalized, Doug offered tracts or Gospels of John to others, but he was politely rebuffed. It was obvious that the patients wanted nothing to do with him or his God. Discouragement set in.

Doug was often awakened n the night by the rasping sound of coughing, both his and others. Early one morning Doug noticed an old man trying to sit on the edge of the bed, but because of weakness, he would fall back. Exhausted, the old man finally lay still and sobbed. Early the next morning the scene was repeated. Then later in the morning, a stench began to permeate the ward; the old man had been trying to get to the rest room.

Says Doug, "the nurses were extremely agitated and angry because they had to clean up the mess. One of the nurses even slapped him. The man, terribly embarrassed, just curled up into a ball and wept."

The next morning – about 2:00 am – Doug noticed the old man was again trying to generate enough strength to get himself out of bed. This time, though, without thinking, Doug got out of bed, went over to the old man,

put an arm under his head and neck, the other under his legs, and gently carried him to the rest room. When he was finished, Doug carried him back to his bed.

The old man, speaking in a language Doug didn't understand, thanked him profusely, and then gently kissed him on the cheek.

Eventually Doug drifted off to an uneasy sleep. In the morning he awakened to a steaming cup of tea served to him by another patient who spoke no English. After the patient served the tea, he made motions indicating that he wanted one of Doug's tracts,

"Throughout the day" says Doug, "people came to me, asking for the Gospel booklets. This included the nurses, the hospital interns, the doctors, until everyone in the hospital had a tract, booklet, or Gospel of John. Over the next few days," he added "several indicated they trusted Christ as Savior as a result of reading the Good News!"

The world doesn't care how much you have or what you know; they want to know how much you care.

I do not know Doug Nichols or Harold Sala, but I know two faith heroes from my own life. I know Lance and Julie Burma from our former church and our kids were good friends. Lance and Julie fell in love with Sierra Leone early in the 2000's. Lance went on a mission trip to Sierra Leone and returned to Bloomington, MN feeling called to help the people he had met. Lance convinced Julie to travel to Sierra Leone with him and as they say, "the rest is history."

Sierra Leone is a small County on the southwest coast of West Africa. This country has 27,699 sq mi (slightly smaller than South Carolina) and a population of 6,807,277 (July 2021 est.). Sierra Leone is an extremely poor country with tremendous inequality in income distribution. Although it has significant reserves of minerals, agricultural and fishing resources, its physical and social infrastructure has struggled to recover from the Civil War that ended in very in 2000.

Lance and Julie started a foundation and today Africa Uplifted is a 501(c)(3) public charity with a mission to enrich the lives of the people of Sierra Leone. The Africa Uplifted website states they accomplish this mission by promoting basic wellness, removing barriers to education, satisfying essential physical needs, nurturing spiritual development, and creating economic opportunities.

I have traveled with Africa Uplifted to Sierra Leone twice and am hoping to go a third time. I witnessed first-hand how Africa Uplifted has enriched the lives of hundreds of families.

Examples of how this has been and continues to be done are.

- Construction of a Community Health Center in the village Manonkoh providing basic medical services to approximately 1,000 residents in the Manonkoh area.
- Constructed and subsidizes a preschool and primary school in the village of Manonkoh.
- Constructed and helps maintain several water wells, latrines and community centers.
- Africa Uplifted has provided maintenance and salary assistance to several churches in rural Sierra Leone.
- Africa Uplifted subsidizes the salaries of over two dozen Sierra Leoneans who work in healthcare, education and project management.

Lance and Julie are faith heroes for me. We aren't all called to bring our faith to India as was Doug Nichols or to Sierra Leone as are Lance and Julie but are called to care for others.

We all have people in our lives that have exemplified this commitment to care, someone who is healing the wounds of the broken or lifts the value of all people. Those who have devoted themselves to a life of service, who sees the divine in others.

The scripture I read earlier is a familiar story for some; I invite you to come to it with fresh eyes today.

The parable starts with a lawyer doing what lawyers do - challenging – this lawyer was challenging Jesus by asking him what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus replies with a return challenge by saying, 'You tell me.' And the lawyer replies with the words of the greatest commandment, '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.' 'You're right,' says Jesus, 'do this and you will live.'

But the lawyer doesn't stop, he pushes Jesus for further explanation, so to illustrate Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan.

He used the story to describe what being a follower of his looked like. He wanted us to understand that being in a relationship with him would mean loving people no matter who they are or who we are. He emphasized what it meant to truly love your neighbor. Jews and Samaritans were neighbors but in Jesus' day, the two groups hated each other.

Christianity Today, January 2019 explains it this way "Jesus wanted it understood that loving your neighbor meant intentionally and deliberately putting aside our own opinions, thoughts, prejudices and preconceived ideas. He was teaching us the importance of loving people where they are, in whatever circumstance they are in, whatever life choice they have made, whatever clothes they wear, whatever language they speak, however they define their gender or sexuality, whatever religion they follow, however they voted. He was showing us that unconditional love can transform circumstances and lives."

The Jericho Road, connecting Jerusalem and Jericho, is about 17 miles long and a notoriously dangerous road. In those 17 miles it drops 3,600 feet. It's steep and it descends sharply, with lots of rocky valleys and passes. Until the fifth century it was called the red or bloody way, and in the 19th century people still paid safety money to local rulers before they travelled on it.

I believe Jesus deliberately set this parable on the Jericho Road because it was 17 miles of violence and oppression.

For you and me, the present-day Jericho Road is any place where crime is on the rise, loneliness is prevalent, food scarcity is real, poverty is on the increase, racism and hate crime is widespread and people are sleeping on the streets.

The Jericho Road is any place where there is violence; it is any place where there is oppression, or where people are robbed of their dignity or robbed of love, food or freedom.

We too travel on Jericho Roads. But sometimes getting involved feels, well it just feels easier not to get involved. The parable of the Good Samaritan is a story that challenges our non-involvement.

The Jericho Road we each travel will look different. Your Jericho Road and my Jericho Road are different because we live different lives. Because our roads are different, we experience different things.

- For example, my road might mean working with those experiencing poverty,
- your road might be dealing with the broken relationships in your own home or in others,
- My road might deal with battling loneliness,
- you might be fighting injustice,
- I might stand up for the oppressed,
- and you might travel the road working for inclusiveness.

Whatever our Jericho Road looks like, it may be difficult, it may be costly and even painful, but it will be well worth the journey if that is what we are called by God to do.

Mandy Bayton is The Cinnamon Network Advisor for Wales, a speaker and a freelance writer. Follow her on Twitter @mandyebayton

I too can be like the people identified in the story of the Good Samaritan. Like the priest and the Levite I also can step over people and never recognize their pain. In fact as I tried to think of someone that I stepped over and never recognized his pain, the only person that kept coming to mind was my father.

I've shared some of my story with you. My father had mostly left our family by the time I was 5 and he was totally gone by the time I was 9. Oh he returned once and awhile for a brief visit, but those visits were scarce and usually trauma filled. As I grew up, I saw him less and less. As an adult I was the one that decided if I saw him or not – and usually it was not.

In 2010 my father was living in Missouri. I hadn't seen him in at least five years. I got a call from my sister telling me that my father was hospitalized after having a stroke. I immediately made plans to go with my sister to his place. Truthfully, I went for only one reason and that was to support my sister.

Today I think about the opportunities I had and never took. I chose not to visit when we lived only 30 minutes apart, I chose not to be a part of his life for birthdays or holidays. I went my way, and he went his. Once he was an invalid in that hospital bed, I saw him as person in need of love but still I offered very little. I was no different than the priest or the Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan.

I missed opportunities to show love, to love my father. I practiced exactly what the priest and the Levite did. In my own way I "stepped over my father. It might have been out of fear, or apathy, or pre-conception or anger or whatever, I was no different than the priest and Levite.

There are people who need help and we may choose to step over. Or maybe we are too self-centered to really notice the needs around us. As we journey through our road trip, we must not step over the needs of others. In your life, who are you being called to help?

There are people in our community that God is calling our church to see and help. Who are they? What obstacles do we have to overcome? Is it suicide, or the drug epidemic, or the homeless, or the lonely or the hungry?

When Doug Nichols contracted tuberculosis and was sent to a sanitarium to recuperate, he found the strength to assist another. A person in needing a hand to get to the rest room. This helping hand opened the door for Nichols to bring the love Jesus to many around him. He didn't "step over" he stopped and assisted. He loved God and loved his neighbor. Because of his faith he loved and was able to do what was difficult and dangerous. Are you ready to do the same?

Dwight L Moody, an American evangelist and preacher, often told a story of a little boy who would walk for miles to go to Sunday school. As he did this, he would pass 30 or 40 other Sunday schools. One day someone asked him why he walked so far. He replied, 'Because they know how to love a boy there.'

How incredible it would be if that were the reputation of each of us and our church – if we were known as people who know how to love. Because then we would be part of the transformation of our Jericho Road. Amen

***Hymn** UMH # 393 Spirit of the Living God

Pastoral Prayer and The Lord's Prayer

God of love, give us a deep love for you, so that we can see the world as you see it, feel the compassion you feel, and be a people whose lives mediate your love to others.

So open our eyes that we might see what the Good Samaritan saw.

Grant us the insight to see the need in others, the wisdom to know what to do, and the will to do it.

And so we pray for all those, who in many and various ways, have been stripped, beaten and left for dead.

We pray for children who must grow up in the most awful of circumstances, especially for those starved of love, or food, or shelter or security.

May they receive the future you have planned for them.

We pray for those we might cross the road to avoid.

Who have been excluded socially because of their race, their financial status, or their history.

May the dignity that is theirs be restored to them.

We pray for those whose need we would rather not face up to, because it requires action of us, those who suffer atrocities because of war, unjust trade rules, or oppressive governments.

May the world receive a true picture of their suffering and the factors that cause it, that justice may be done.

Open our eyes, that we might not cross the road from human need.

Give us a deep love for you, that we might see your love at work in this world, and that we might Go and do likewise.

~ posted on the **Faith and Unity Department of the Baptist Union of Great Britain** <http://www.baptist.org.uk/prayers-of-intercession.html>

We pray to be like Jesus and in His name we pray.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

Hymn

UMH # 381

Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us (verses 1,3,4)

Offering

Today we have been called to go out to show Christ's love to all nations; through our offering we take the first step to meet the needs of others in our neighborhood, region and the world.

***Doxology** UMH # 95 Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

***Prayer of Dedication**

God of all nations, let us act upon the call to serve all people in your name. Take these gifts, multiply them, and give us the strength and courage to be your change to bring your Kingdom to this world. Amen.

***Hymn**

UMH # 382

Have Thine Own way Lord (verses 1-3)

***Benediction**

"The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace."

Go now to love and serve the lord

Announcements