

July 10, 2016
Luke 10
Christ the King New Brighton
The Good Samaritan as told on Payne Ave

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?” The Lawyer 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 Jesus said to him, “you have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to look smart, the lawyer asked Jesus, “and who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied

A man was going from St Paul to Falcon Heights. His car had a taillight out, so the authorities pulled him over. They threatened him and shot him. They left him for dead. Now, there was back up that came to the scene. When these authorities got there, they asked the weeping woman what had happened. They avoided the man left for dead.

An unexpected neighbor showed up. He saw the suffering of this little family. And his reaction was a visceral, gut wrenching response. He brought drinks and food to the weeping woman. He brought comfort to the frightened child. He offered to stay with them as they grieved.

Usually we don't know the name of the man left to the side of the road. Luke doesn't give us a name. Only that this man has been severely beaten and taken advantage of. He was treated as less than human. We don't even know the names of the bystanders. We only know that two of them had immense power in the Jewish community. A priest and a levite. They were authority figures. They could have made a difference.

The samaritan, the samaritan is unnamed. Only identified by ethnicity. Only identified as the person outside of community. the one not expected to show up.

This portion of the story feels real. Doesn't it? I read this on Thursday on the street. I knew leading up to the moment of preaching that it felt real. As I read this, I was overcome by the spirit. I was overcome by the power of God's words on the street. And I wept as I read the gospel. I wept as the Spirit showed me Philando Castile left for dead in Jesus' story. I still can hardly take the magnitude of God's words in this world in.

Too often on the streets of St Paul, the stories found in scripture feel real. The hunger and thirst for justice and righteousness is real.

Before Wednesday, I had thought the key to this story from Jesus was verse 27. "The lawyer answered, 'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.'"

Your neighbor as yourself.

We hate ourselves, don't we?

We loathe ourselves.

We can't remember that we have been called beloved in this world and that so have our brothers and sisters.

At times, I am asked by well meaning people, "don't you just want to change folks?" you see, I spend my days with folks who struggle in this world. Folks who have been left for dead in so many ways. the death of poverty, addiction, racism, mental illness, sexism. I show up, not to bring change to those left for dead, but to bring the good news of life in Christ.

This is the story that I tell.

Mark 1:9-11

Mark 9:2-8

Dearly beloved, we are not here to change the most vulnerable among us. We are called to listen to God when God calls out that we are baptized into the life of Christ and called to live as beloved.

You are called beloved and nothing can change that. philando was and is called beloved of God. Alton was and is called, beloved of God. Lorne, Michael, Patrick, Brent and Michael, were and are called beloved of God. Nothing can ever take that reality away.

Nothing.

Not poverty, not addiction, not racism, not mental illness, not sexism. None of this can take away the reality of God's love.

But, it feels like it can.

Because, we don't listen. We don't listen to God calling down at every baptism at every birth announcing the joyful arrival of a new part of the body of Christ. We don't listen to God saying I am so incredibly delighted in this creation. We don't listen when the lawyer recites from memory his confirmation verse, " 'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.' "

We don't listen when Jesus says, go and do this. Go, love the people. Love them as you love yourself. Go, value their lives as you value your own. For the samaritan's life matters. The black life matters, the queer life matters, the latino life matters, the officers life matters. For, your life matters.

Dearly beloved, we are called to resist the urge to cross the street when our guts are moved by the deep pain and suffering we see. We are called out into this world to wade into the suffering and remember that we are called beloved and so is our neighbor. We are called to BELIEVE that we are beloved and so is our neighbor.

Go. Go out into this world and proclaim the belovedness of each and every person you meet. Go out and remind each other to listen to those words of transfiguration. The words that makes us shine with God's love in this world. You are beloved. Go. Go and proclaim this.

Amen.