

SERMON - THE 13TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY - 17 AUGUST 2008
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Luke 10:29 (KJV)

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

Who is my neighbor?

That is a question that has been asked many times, I'm sure, since the first re-telling of this story. The lawyer, in response to the parable and the question from Jesus, ***Luke 10:36 (KJV)*** *Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?* Answered, ***Luke 10:37 (KJV)*** *And he said, He that shewed mercy on him.*

Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Does that mean that the only people that are our neighbors are those that show mercy on us?

What do you think?

Does that mean that if we are to be a good neighbor we need to show mercy on others?

Maybe that is the case.

The Greek that is used here is the word **eleos**, (*el'-eh-os*) of uncertain affinity; which translates as *compassion* (human or divine, especially active) or (+ tender) mercy.

We are to have compassion, we are to have tender mercy on others in order to qualify as a good neighbor.

You noticed I have made a switch on you from who is our neighbor to what would make us a good neighbor.

Christians are called to be good neighbors, to be kind, compassionate, merciful people. We are called to be kind, compassionate and merciful, not rich and successful.

We are called to be humble not overbearing.

We are called to a life of service to others rather than a life of accumulation of stuff for ourselves.

That is what makes us good neighbors, to see the Christ in others.

We sometimes get so caught up in our being “church” that we forget that we live the Gospel by how we live our lives. We get caught up in doing things “properly” rather than mercifully like the priest and the Levite in the parable that saw the wounded man and passed by on the other side because of the ritual purification they would have had to perform if they had stopped and helped him.

Who then is our neighbor?

Anyone we meet.

We talk about growth here at St. John’s. We talk about getting new members. We will grow both in our life, our journey with Christ and in numbers if we begin to concentrate our efforts on showing compassion and mercy.

This takes work on all of our parts. We all have to be involved. We have to let our works of compassion and mercy not our works of ritual and properliness shine through to others. We have to let our faith in God shine through by our works of compassion and mercy.

On this subject, I would like to remind us all of what St. James wrote.

James 2:14-17 (ESV) What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

We are commanded to "Love our neighbors as ourselves" and that includes pretty well everyone we come in contact with. That means we are to have compassion on and show mercy to everyone we meet.

Then everyone we meet is our neighbor.

Because you never know who you might encounter as Saint Benedict said, *Let all guests who arrive be received as Christ, because He will say: "I was a stranger and you took Me in" (Mt 25:35).*

We may even receive an angel unawares.

Amen.