

**The Parable of the Samaritan**  
(Much gratitude to Nadia Bolz Weber)  
**Luke 10: 27-37 (NRSV)**

**Prayer of Illumination**

Spirit, lead us.

Light up the truth in these tales we retell. Spirit, lead us, as we become the next chapter ourselves. Amen.

**Sermon**

I read a lot of articles, sermons, and comments this week about this familiar parable to find something to offer you this morning. In the midst of everything that is happening.

Typically, when I read this parable, I start to feel guilty that maybe in some metaphorical way – I am one of the robbers.

Or I get self-righteous and angry – and ask what is wrong with these people? Or I admit defeat that evil is the winner. Just forget about it.

Nadia Bolz Weber, a Lutheran pastor not in the mainstream – she served a church she calls “A House for All Sinners and Saints” helped turned my thinking around.

See what you think.

**A man was traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho....** when a group of robbers, or terrorists, or white old man in the grocery store tells you to go back home. Attacked him with tear gas, suicide bomb .... or an AR-15 assault rifle. Or by kicking him as he lay on the ground. They all but left the man for dead; outside the airport... or on the street in Detroit ... or in his car next to his girlfriend, ...or along the route of the protest march. (pause)  
And then the entire assault was captured on a bystander’s cell phone and within seconds it was uploaded on Facebook.

**A Presbyterian Pastor walks by** and is so absorbed watching the video of the attack and formulating her perfectly articulated outrage on Twitter – that she doesn’t even see the beaten man who is literally right next to her. She wants to be the “good ally” yet she misses an opportunity to show compassion to an actual human being right in front of her.

**Then a Director of a non-profit walks by.** He is burdened with his own guilt for not attending a Black Lives Matter protest, speaking out on gun control, or the out of balance economic system- which is why the man was traveling alone on an unsafe road in the first place. So, he chooses to not even look up from his podcast that is talking about racism. And he too missed the chance to show mercy.

**Now, by the time these two passed the man, hundreds of thousands of people left horrible comments** on the video of his assault either about expressing racist thoughts about why it was his own fault, or rants about the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment.

**And then a minute later** we are all posting comments about how this is all about robbers, terrorists, and bad police officers.

**So now, the Samaritan arrives on the scene along-**

**He finds the man, who was robbed and assaulted – and** gives him water and a cliff bar, dresses his wounds, gives him a ride to a hotel, stays the night with him to make sure he is ok, and pays the Marriott bill in full.

**Well by this time, the media has posted thousands of articles about how often these attacks happen;** and a 24-hour long news cycle broadcasts over and over the video of his assault.

**And before long,** all the news networks have talked over and over about the assault - from every possible angle.

**In fact, it is all anyone is talking about - so it starts to feel like that's all there is.**

**But then you realize – the news does not mention anything of the Samaritan.** They never once mention the kindness. Violence is highlighted – Mercy and generosity are ignored – **because compassion and kindness do not attract viewers.**

I'm not sure about anyone else, but lately it has felt like all the new feeds -social media, TVs, radios are some sort of **an Atrocity-of-the-Day Calendar** - of cyber terroir, more Covid 19 than any other country, and police shootings and hate crimes.

So, I was not looking forward to writing a sermon this week

I just didn't feel like I had any wisdom, anything insightful or helpful to offer this morning.

Then, thank God in heaven, I received an email of Stephen Gould's op-ed soon after the 9-11 terrorist attacks: (a quote from Nadia Boltz Weber sermon)

***“Good and kind people outnumber all others by thousands to one.***

***The tragedy of human history lies in the enormous potential for destruction in rare acts of evil, not in the high frequency of evil people.***

***Complex systems can only be built step by step, whereas destruction requires but an instant.***

***Thus, in what I like to call the Great Asymmetry, every spectacular incident of evil will be balanced by 10,000 acts of kindness, too often unnoted and invisible as the “ordinary” efforts of a vast majority.***

***He writes: We have a duty, almost a holy responsibility, to record and honor the victorious weight of these innumerable little kindnesses, when an unprecedented act of evil so threatens to distort our perception of ordinary human behavior”.***

So, my dear virtual church, I read the text over and over – trying to find something that has not been said 1000 times about the Parable of the Good Samaritan –in the “atrocity-of-the-day” world. Something that was not dreadful.

**And then I noticed-**

**It was a simple thing that made all the difference for me this week.**

**Look at this story again.**

**Most of the words Jesus uses in the story is about the Good Samaritan -**

**And only a few lines are about the violence or the madness.**

**And yet, MORE sentences are about mercy, and love and kindness.  
Because this is not the parable of the Robbers. Right?**

It's the parable of the Samaritan doing justice, kindness, and loving your neighbor.

**Let me be clear – this sermon is not about ignoring the violence, death, and horrible actions that happens almost every day.**

I do not want to come across as Polly -Anna or blind to injustice.  
Because I am not.

**But make no mistake, Jesus tells the truth** about the seriousness of the attack.  
**Jesus tells the truth about the failure of the priest and Levite** not helping the Samaritan. (pause)

**But here is the point - Jesus does not dwell on of any of that.**

Instead – he uses most of the story not to talk about assault of the robbers -  
**But mercy, love and kindness.**

So, there is another option to hear the story and preaching this sermon.

**The choice is not between ignoring** violence and suffering.

Or focusing only on the violence and suffering in all this darkness.

Here is the thing, darkness does not have the right **to have our hearts**, it does **not have the right to fill our minds**, it does **not have the right to steal kindness.**

You **can** sit in the suffering, you **can** name the evil forces of racism and gun violence, you can confess our own complicity and you can lament and protest. **But you cannot let it control you.**

The main character in Jesus' the parable is not evil. **The main character is love, light, and kindness.**

\* **Never** - give more ground to the evil stuff than it deserves.

**So as an act of defiance this morning, try this. I invite you hold in your heart** the names of those who died this week with words of mercy love, and kindness.

And write down every act of kindness and generosity that you can remember happening this week.

If Stephen Gould's math is right, we need 10,000 *acts of kindness to balance every spectacular incident of evil.*

**But the good news is that *there is more than that out there.***

**Because this world is not a parable of Robbers. Right?**

**This world is a parable about God's light which scatters darkness.**

So, by all means name evil for what it is, and root out the sin and racism within us, and fight for justice, **but then let us turn the cameras toward the light –**

**And not become so consumed** by the effects of evil – (or whatever you call horrible actions) - that we miss the chance to be kind to a stranger,

And we miss the chance to stop and read to our kids-  
And we miss the chance to notice how acts of beauty and kindness  
outnumber acts of evil by the thousands!

**When we don't that, we hand evil a bigger victory** than it earned when in fact it has  
already lost. Because "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate  
cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." (MLK jr.)

**See, in the same 24-hour news cycle that only can speak of evil –**  
babies were born  
and people feel in love  
and someone put an old lady's shopping cart back for her  
and hot meals were served to guests who lost their jobs,  
and prayers were said  
and little girls made brand new friends  
and someone paid for the coffee of the person behind them in line  
and flowers were brought to the police department  
and children made perfectly mis-spelled protest signs  
and someone in my neighborhood asked to wash my clothes so I would not have to go to  
take a risk at the laundry mat.

**Every second of every day our God arrives unannounced in the mercy, love, and  
kindness of other people.**

**"When all is said and done," Krista Tippett, host of the NPR radio program "On Being"  
says it perfectly: "none of us will be measured by how much we accomplish, but by  
how well we love." AMEN.**

### **Benediction**

May the path that you walk  
be ever guided by justice and light  
By the truth that you stand.  
May it show, into the land.  
May the words of Christ  
disturb you all your life.  
The road you've chosen is not easy  
– yet, here you stand!