

[Deuteronomy 30:9-14](#); [Colossians 1:1-14](#) ; [Luke 10:25-37](#)

The story we hear this Sunday from the Gospel according to Luke, is probably the most well known story from the New Testament. We often hear it as the story Jesus told about the “Good Samaritan”. The word “good” however, is not actually in the text. Jesus is being questioned by a person who maybe wanted to engage personally with the Rabbi Jesus who was making quite a stir. The man who questioned Jesus is often called a “lawyer”, but more accurate would be—a scholar, a man who knew his scripture. Perhaps this nameless man had been traveling with his friend telling others “the kingdom of God has come near you” (Luke 10:9)—bringing healing and hope. Perhaps he was turning to Jesus to prove a point to his friend—that to “Love God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself ” had little to do with the challenges of staying out of the way of Roman soldiers or standing up to their taunts and more to do with repeating the prayer from Torah until it is part of you. in Deuteronomy 30:14 we hear “the word is very close to you and in your heart to observe.”

Jesus acknowledges his answer is the correct response (maybe the man is young-and seeks the teacher’s approval!); Jesus commends him. The words should be on the lips and hearts of every person following Torah—“do this and and you will live”, meaning you shall know the abundance of living



in relationship with God. What happens next in a short story would have set the group of people sitting at the feet of Jesus on edge. Jesus noticed the restless moving, the whispers to friends, the shuffle of feet as he began a story about “who is your neighbor?”.

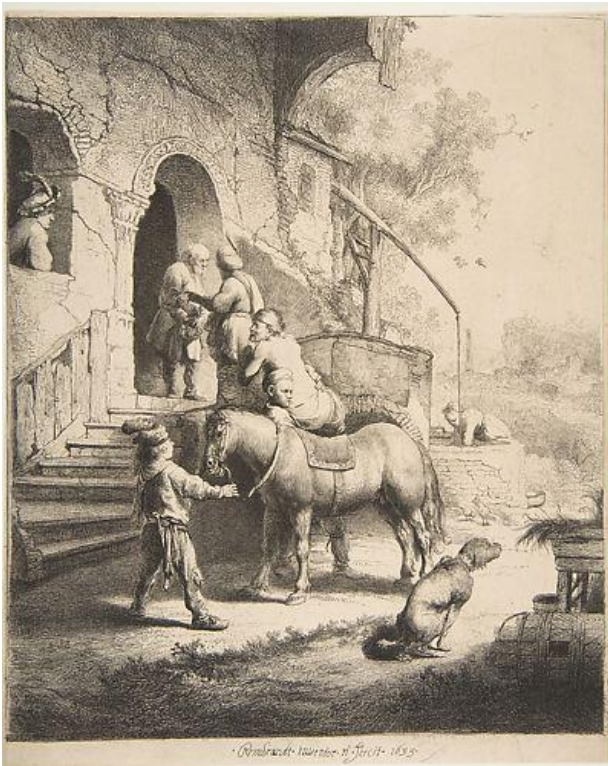
In a quick moment the scene changes. The beginning of the story puts many individuals in a place of anxiety and fear—traveling on the road without protection and attacked and robbed. No caravan, no friendly soldiers, rather robbers who took what he had; they beat him and left him after removing any clothes of any value—and Jesus adds he lay there half dead. Anyone who might have traveled the road in their past, might imagine where those mauranders might have been waiting, or blamed the man for traveling alone, or thought about moments when they or someone they loved was assaulted. And too, there is no emergency room.

*In this painting by Vincent Van Gogh we feel the weight of the the beaten man as he is placed upon the horse. We see the feet that will walk the way to the inn where the Samaritan will use his own money for the innkeeper to care for the beaten man. Van Gogh paints this in 1889 as he struggles in a sanitarium, which was once a monestry in southern France. His mental illness, his friends say, is out of control. May we wonder if he prays he can find a way to recovery? As an artist, does he see himself as the Samaritan, binding up wounds with paint and prayer and angel wings?*

Considering this story again is one of the ways we listen to how the Spirit is speaking to our heart in this moment. In prayer and imagination, we can place ourselves at the feet of Jesus and also into the story as many artists have done. In the *hearing again* of scripture we are reminded that God is changing us to be more compassionate and more able to see the stranger who is family—the one who is abandoned alongside of the road. The gentle Spirit or the insistent voice of a friend may remind us to let less important things go and self-imposed timelines to be reconsidered. Often when we offer healing to others healing happens inside of us. Always following the way of Christ leads us to see the world differently and into compassion for others. The road into Jerusalem is not an easy road, but Jesus goes before us marking the way of life.

If we are as surprised that it is the Samaritan that helps the beaten man, like the followers of Jesus were, then perhaps we can glimpse who the others are in our own lives that are acting in mercy with compassion. Holy Scripture is full of people who did not expect their encounter with God to lead them

to call out hypocrisy or greed, (Amos) lead a people into freedom, (Moses), save her brother and her nation, (Miriam), or lead people into faith (Lydia). God is doing amazing things through all of us – and we will see if we are attentive.



*The Good Samaritan (1630) Rembrandt van Rijn*

*Arriving at the inn the task at hand is not finished. The Samaritan cares for the man that day and night, then promises to pay the innkeeper more on his return if the healing man requires more care.*

*Pastor Susan+*