

A NEW LOOK

I am humbled and honored each time I stand before you to share God's word.

Now may the Holy Spirit open our eyes to something new today and speak to us. Please be seated.

A year and one day ago I preached my first sermon to you. I never knew it was the celebration of St Benedict of Nursia. I remember being a little upset by it because this was not in my original plan. I did not know when I chose this Sunday to preach that it would be St Benedicts Day again. Surprise surprise. So, I said to the Lord, there must be more for me to learn about St. Benedict. After all, our parish is named after him, so he must be very important. I did more reading about St Benedict and found out that on July 11th every year he is celebrated and parishes celebrate St. Benedicts Day on the closest Sunday to July 11th each year. I learned more about his personal life and journey. Things were not always easy for him as they are not for us. I had a little bump in the road this week and asked myself the question "What would St. Benedict do?" I concluded that he would acknowledge it, feel it and give it to God and move on with his day. He is most

remembered by his work with The Rule of St Benedict. These 73 chapters of the rule outline how to live in balance within a community by prayer and work. He is also considered the father of Western Monasticism. It was his yearning for a deeper connection with God that spoke to me the most. He had compassion for all people. I believe his connection with God came through spiritual practices of silence, lectio Divina, contemplative prayer, meditation and many other practices that I don't know about. Our priest Linzi has gently been leading us into spiritual practices with silence, breathing the Psalms and chanting. Today in the story of "The Good Samaritan", I thought we could do a spiritual practice of Visio Divina. I would like Sarah to read our gospel passage again today. As she reads it, I want you to visualize who you would be in the story. Put yourself there. What do you feel? What do you hear? What are your surroundings?

Sarah reads 10:25-37.

Feedback from the congregation-5 minutes

Did anyone place themselves in the wounded man's place? I didn't. As I contemplated this, I wanted to think I would be the good Samaritan. On some days I would be

and other days not so much. This is a good example of how to live out our faith and love. I can imagine that St. Benedict would have been moved with compassion and helped this man. This past week God gave me a story from a friend in Bakersfield, a modern- day example of a Good Samaritan act. My friend who is a single, cautious, 70 year old, female saw a young man on a bike with his dog getting ready to go into the Dollar Tree. He was looking for a place to tie his dog up. She offered to watch the dog while he went in the store. He was hesitant, but agreed. When he came out with a few groceries she took the groceries and followed him to the motel where homeless folks were living. He said he had lost all faith in humanity and thanked her for restoring his hope.

As I delved a little deeper into the story of the “good Samaritan” I was reminded of how much the Jewish people hated the Samaritans. Two weeks ago in the gospel reading of Luke 9:51-55 James and John asked Jesus if He wanted them to call down fire from heaven to consume them because they rejected Jesus. Jesus admonished them and moved on. When Jesus asked the lawyer (who was an expert in Jewish law) which of the

three was the neighbor, the lawyer couldn't even say the Samaritan. The other was his rival enemy that he loathed and whom disgusted him. Could Jesus be showing us something about the wounded man? Have we been so focused on the Good Samaritan that we have missed something? Did the wounded man ask him if he was a Samaritan? Most of us or possibly none of us has been beaten or down like this man. However, we may get into a situation someday of desperately needing help? I have chosen to share a few modern- day scenarios:

An immigrant is robbed, and an ICE agent saves his life.

A Ukrainian child is lying wounded on the ground and a Russian soldier picks her up to get her help.

An Israeli Jewish man is robbed, and a Good Hamas member saves his life.

A liberal democrat is robbed and a conservative republican saves her life.

I am not trying to underestimate the real differences that divide us. The differences between the Jews and Samaritans in Jesus day were as real and difficult to negotiate as the few examples I have shared. Jesus was

trying to show them a new way to live and love? When I was in the hospital Intensive Care Unit, I did not ask my nurses about their political preference, gender or race. I just accepted their help. Maybe Jesus is telling us here to set aside our biases, prejudices, theology and anything else that would get in our way to give help or receive help as the wounded man did?

Who is our neighbor? Amen