

“Seeing with God’s Heart”

Luke 10:25-37

Nov. 8, 2020

Rev. Billy Song – St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church of Lomita

This morning we are beginning a new sermon series on the topic of Stewardship.

The series will be a 3 week series culminating on Thanksgiving Sunday, where traditionally we encourage everyone to come to church that day and bring with them some kind of “Harvest Offering” in the form of fruits, vegetables, grains or breads.

Here’s a picture of last year’s Harvest Table when it was all put together, look at all those food offerings! (pineapples, bananas, carrots, pumpkins, oranges, onions, apples, tomatoes, potatoes just to name a few!)



Well, this year, we’d like to continue the tradition of giving a Harvest Offering to the Lord but since we’re not worshipping in person, how are we going to do that?”

Well, instead of bringing your Harvest Offering on Sunday, (since we can’t) for this year, we’re going to ask everyone to bring it to church on Sat. afternoon anytime between the hours of 2 – 4 pm and we are going to open up the doors of the sanctuary for you to come inside and place your offering right here at the table.

It will just be like how we did it last year, except it will be on a Saturday and instead of in a worship service, you’ll be allowed to come in one person or family at a time and present your offering to the Lord.

There will be a few of us here making sure we maintain social distance and I’ll be in the Sanctuary to receive you all, and after the Harvest offering is collected - it will be prayed for and blessed and then after church the next day we’ll deliver it to Beacon Light Missions.

So please mark your calendars - **Sat. Nov 21st, from 2-4 pm**, that's when we'll collect our Harvest Offering along with our pledge cards which you'll be receiving this week.

So - we are starting our Stewardship series this morning and for this year's theme, I'm focusing on the parable that Jesus told in Luke 10 aka "The Good Samaritan."

Each week we'll look at a different part of the parable. For example, this morning we are looking at the Priest, the Levite and Samaritan and why they were so different and I'd like to suggest, that all those qualities that made the Samaritan a "good" Samaritan, are the very same qualities that that would make him a good Steward as well.

What I hope you'll discover is that stewardship begins with the heart and not necessarily with the checkbook.

Here's today's scripture passage from Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)

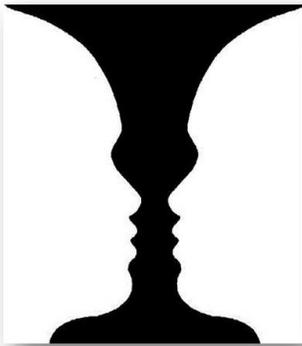
²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" ²⁷ He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii^[e] and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' ³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

I'd like begin by showing you a few pictures that perhaps you've seen them before, and depending on your perspective, some of you will see one thing, while others we see something else.



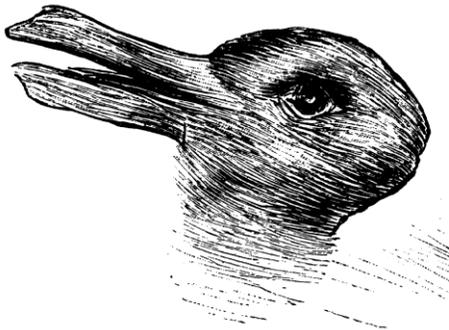
Here's the first picture by a cartoonist name W.E. Hill in 1915 called "My Wife & My Mother-in-Law"

What do you see in the picture? Some people see a **young woman**, with her head turned back while other people see an **old lady** with a big nose and chin tucked in.



Here's another picture a famous optical illusion by Edgar Rubin called: Rubin's vase.

Do you see a candle stand or do you see two faces looking at each other?

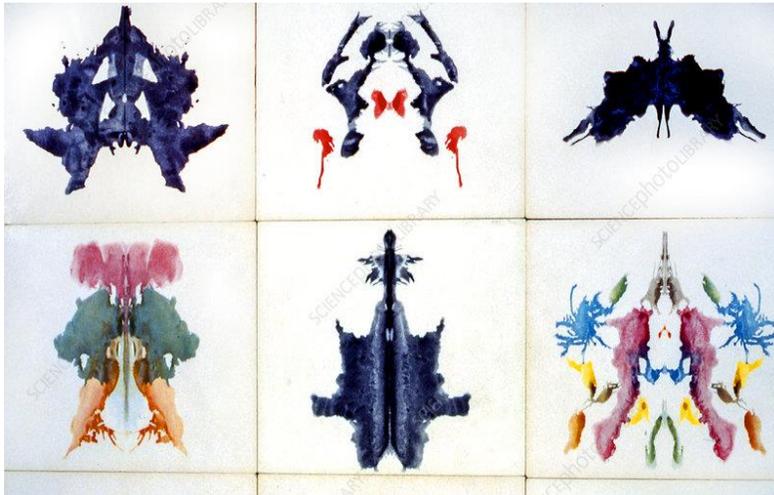


There's a lot more of these kinds of pictures where some people see one thing, while others see something different .

Here's another picture. Do you see a duck or do you see a rabbit?

Well, back in 1921, a Swiss Psychologist by the name of Herman Rorschach thought it would be a neat idea to show some images to his patients and ask them what they saw.

They became known as the Rorschach images which were basically inkblots like this one below.



And what he found out was that how his patients responded, and what they said they saw in these images, said a lot about their personality, and thus, led the psychologist to the proper form of treatment. What do you see in these pictures? Anyone see a butterfly? How about a tree? What about fireworks?

Well, in today's scripture passage, Jesus told a parable where the "image" on the side of the road was a man - an injured man, robbed and beaten and left for dead, and when a Priest, a Levite and a Samaritan all stumbled upon the man, they all saw something different, and what they saw led to a different course of action.

Now let me set up the parable that Jesus told.

Jesus began by saying:

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead."

That's how the parable began. The parable that Jesus told may have been made up and not a true story. It may have been hypothetical like many of the other parables that Jesus told.

But the road going from Jerusalem to wasn't hypothetical - it did indeed fact exist and it was approx.. 17-18 miles long and descended about 3000 feet. The city of Jericho that Jesus mentioned was also a real city and is not to be confused with the city of Jericho that was destroyed in the O.T. This is a different city which happened to have the same name and was built by Herod the Great. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho also had a reputation it was littered with thieves and not very safe to travel on, where highway robberies often took place.

So the fact that a man was robbed and beaten and left for dead on the side of the road, was a very plausible scenario, and perhaps they experienced something like that while traveling on that road.

The Priest.

Now the very first person to come across the injured man was none other than a priest.

By comparison, a priest might be similar to a church minister, but basically he was a religious man, and the way Jesus told the parable was that when the priest was going down that road and saw the injured man, *“he passed by on the other side of the road.”*

In other words, when the priest saw the injured man up ahead on the road, the priest practiced “social distancing” by giving the man a lot of room.

“Social distancing.” Now there’s a phrase we never heard before this year began, but by now, all of us should be experts at keeping “social distance.” You’re supposed to observe “social distancing” when you’re out in public, or when you mingle with people outside of your immediate family.

The other day I was in line at Home Depot waiting in line to pay for something and the line was very long. So I pulled out my phone and was checking my email - not paying attention to the line. And when it seemed like it was moving, I took a few steps forward, but because I wasn’t paying close attention, I ended up standing almost right behind the person in front of me.

So the person turned around and gave me that look - you know, the look that says: *“You’re standing too close to me.”* So then I backed up a few feet, but then I was too close to the person that was behind me! And so, now everyone in line is giving me that look, *“this guy doesn’t know what he’s doing.”*

I was so embarrassed... but then I realized I had my face mask on and nobody knew – who I was! (I need to work on my social distancing)

Well, the priest in the story kept his social distance from the injured man for a whole another set of reasons. Not because he was afraid of a virus but because he had to remain “pure” so he could perform temple duties.

Did you know that? The Priest avoided the injured man not to avoid an unpleasant situation, but because he had to stay pure and clean to perform temple duties.

And according to religious requirements, if he had become “unclean” by touching or being near the man, he would have been disqualified from serving in the temple, for a whole week. Technically it’s not the same as being quarantined, but he would have not been able to continue working at his job.

So, the Priest’s excuse for not helping out the injured man was that he was more focused on his job, and as for helping the injured man, well that was someone else’s job.

It was someone else’s job.

It was someone else’s duty.

It was someone else’s problem.

That’s what the Priest saw lying there on the side of the road. What he failed to see was that the injured man was a fellow human being.

Did you hear the story about the 4 people who were all part of a church? Their names were: **Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody**. Of course you’ve heard it - because I told a few years ago.)

When things were going well at church, Everybody was happy. But when the church was going through some tough times, Everybody was asked to help. But Everybody was sure that Somebody would help and while Anybody could have helped it was Nobody who eventually did.

One day, the church needed something done and so they asked Somebody to help, but Somebody got mad because Anybody could have done it, after all, it was really Everybody’s job. In the end, the work was given to Nobody and Nobody did a really find job.

One and on it went - whenever work was to be done, Nobody could always be counted on. Nobody visited the sick. Nobody gave her time. Nobody shared her faith. In short, Nobody was a very faithful member.

Finally, the day came when Somebody left the church and took Anybody and Everybody w/him. Guess who was left at the church? Nobody.

That's what the Priest may have thought. *"It's not My job, it's SOMEBODY else's job. He's not My problem, he's SOMEBODY else's problem."*

The Levite

The second person in the story who came upon the injured man was a Levite.

Jesus said in vs 32:

"So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side."

The Levite in the story was also practicing "social distancing," for when he too saw the injured man, he also crossed on the other side of the road.

Now, *"What is a Levite?"* That's a very good question. A Levite is a person who comes from the line and tribe of Levi who was one of the 12 sons that were born to Jacob.

This was the tribe that was responsible for moving the Tabernacle and setting it up and breaking it down, and unlike priests, who actually performed the ceremonies and performed the sacrifices, it was the Levites job to set it all up and then clean up once the priests were all done.

To use a cultural expression, Levites were just below priests on the religious totem pole, or in the religious pecking order they came right after priests.

The Levite in the story should have had no problem helping the injured man in the parable. Levites weren't bound by the strict purity laws that priests were held do, because the Levites did all the things that were "behind the scenes."

For comparison, if a priest was sort of like a minister, than think of the Levite sort of like the Sexton or the janitor of a church.

The Sexton does a lot of the work behind the scenes, while the minister is up there at the pulpit. The Sexton keeps everything clean, while the minister makes all the mess. The Sexton makes sure everything is neat and tidy. The Sexton makes sure everything is locked up. If the bathrooms are out of soap, who do you call? The Sexton, not the minister. (Well, you can call me, I don't mind, but then I'll just call the Sexton.)

If something needs fixing - call the Sexton. If something is missing - call the Sexton. The Sexton is on call 24 hours a day and available 7 days a week!

In fact, the Sexton at St. Mark's moved right across the street from the church, just so that she can be here on a minutes notice! I hope I don't get in trouble here for saying any of this, but you can always count on the Sexton to get things done!

She's an invaluable resource, whether it's something here at church or something else in life - you can always count on the Sexton and her phone number is (310) _____!

So, what possible excuse could the Levite in our story have had for not helping the injured man? It's simple - the Levite was a very busy person.

The Levite was a very busy person. He had a busy schedule. He had a busy life. There wasn't enough hours in a day to get all the things he needed to get done, perhaps the work of a Levite was never done.

So let me ask you, *"Do any of you feel like a Levite?"*

Does it seem like there's always something to keep you busy? Project after project. Task after task. Laundry load after laundry load. Sinks full of endless dishes. In-boxes full of emails that go on forever. A busy life - a hurried life when will it ever end?

Several years ago an experiment was done on a college campus inspired by our parable, where researched studied students as they walked past a man who looked sick and in distress.

The man was part of the experiment and so he wasn't really sick, but as students walked by - the man would keel over, moan and make noises that would capture the student's attention.

Of the students they observed, what they noticed was that when the student was pressed for time and appeared to be seemingly late, only 10% of them stopped to help, while students who were not in a hurry and not pressed for time, 63% of them stopped to help. The conclusion was this, students who were too busy failed to even notice the man because they were self-preoccupied.

It's been a long time since I've been a student, but I know I'm also guilty of doing the same thing. Instead of seeing the people that God puts in my path and really notice what's going on, I quickly glance at my watch and remind myself how busy I am or how late I am. The Levite also failed to see the injured man a fellow human being.

The Samaritan.

We finally come to the Samaritan.

Listen to what Jesus said in vs. 33:

“But when a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.”

The NIV Translation says that when the Samaritan saw the injured man, he had “pity” on him.

In this case, I think other translations use a better word. In the King James translation, as well as other translations, they use the word “compassion.”

*“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had **COMPASSION** on him.”*

I like that translation better but listen to the MSG version of Luke 10:33

“A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him.”

I like that translation best! The Samaritan’s heart went out to the injured man. That was the very first thing the Samaritan did. Before reaching into his bag and pulling out supplies, before putting the man on his donkey and taking him to the nearest inn, the very first thing that the Samaritan gave to the man was compassion and a piece of his heart.

Seeing with God’s heart

When the Samaritan saw the injured man lying there on the side of the road, he didn’t walk on the other side of the road. He didn’t see the man as an inconvenience, or as someone else’s problem, what the Samaritan saw was the same thing that God saw, and how the Samaritan saw was the same way God saw, because the Samaritan saw with the heart of God.

This is how stewardship begins..... It begins with the heart and how we see the world, and how we see others with the heart of God. It’s about seeing the injured man, and asking: *“What does God want me to see?”*

It's not about asking ourselves: "Do I have time in my busy schedule to help the man?" like the Levite. It's not about asking ourselves: "Is this part of my job description" like the priest. It's about seeing in others what God wants us to see, and in order to do that, you have to see with the Heart of God in order to have any compassion.

When God sent Samuel in the O.T. to go and anoint the new king of Israel, Samuel thought that it would be an easy task. And so Samuel went to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse who had 7 sons.

And as each son was presented before Samuel, Samuel was so sure that it would be the son named Eliab, but then God said to Samuel:

"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

And so finally young David was brought forth and that's who Samuel anointed.

Stewardship begins by looking at the world through God's eyes and with God's heart.

There's a great quote I once heard I don't know who the orig. author is,



There used to be a TV show on CBS called Undercover Boss. The premise of the show was that the CEO of a company would go "under cover" and slip into his or her work force pretending to be an intern or an entry level employee.

The fun part of the show was at the end when the “boss” would reveal their true identity to the delight or dismay of the employees working for them.

In some episodes, the other employees would treat their boss (who was often in disguise) sometimes not so well and even sometimes harshly. Some would bark orders, and even tell them they were doing their job poorly, while in other episodes, the employees would treat their undercover boss with the utmost care and respect.

There was this one episode where the CEO of Modell Sporting’s Goods, a man by the name of Mitch Modell, put on a disguise and changed his name to “Joey.” Then he went to one of his local stores as an entry level employee and was under the supervision of a woman named Angel.

Here’s a picture of Mitch Modell. Mitch is on the left the disguise “Joey” on the right,



and here’s another picture of “Joey” being trained by Angel.



Angel’s job was to train the new employee who was actually the CEO of the company, and during the show - and during breaks - they started to swap stories.

“Joey” told Angel that he used to own a pizza shop which had to close down, and now, is looking to start all over. So Angel says to him:

“Joey, I think you’re brave, and I think sometimes you may have ‘ups’ and sometimes ‘downs’. As long as you drive yourself you’re going to be fine.”

Then Angel tells Joey a little bit about herself. It turns out - Angel is 25 years old, and the mother of 3 children and going through a tough time. She's been living in a homeless shelter while trying to raise 3 kids and this job is all she has from being out on the streets.

But despite Angel's hardships, she doesn't let any of that show when she comes in to work and what Joey noticed over the course of the week, was that Angel carried out her task like a champion - treating every customer with cheer and hospitality and treated him with care and respect - even though he was an entry level worker.

At the end of the show and at the "big reveal" - when it was time for "Joey" to tell Angel his true identity, Angel is besides herself that "Joey" was actually the CEO, and because he was so impressed with her work ethic and how she treated every customer and even how she treated him, he instantly promoted Angel to Asst. Manager on the spot, gave her a hefty raise, and then he gifted her \$250K to move out of the shelter and buy a home for her and her kids.

Jesus once told a parable in Matt 25 about sheep and goats, where the teaching moment was when Jesus said:

"What you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me."

Stewardship is about seeing the world with the heart of God and seeing others as our brothers and sisters in Christ. To see others like family to treat others like spiritual siblings and that is my charge to all of you this week.