

13 July 2025
Pentecost 5

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“Someone”

Text: Luke 10:25-37; Leviticus 18:1-5; 19:9-18; Colossians 1:1-14

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

It all happened so fast. They were on me before I knew it. I was just traveling down the road, minding my own business, when they came out of no where. I don't even know how many there were. And they took everything. My donkey, my supplies, the little money I had, even the clothes off my back. Everything! That was bad enough, but they weren't satisfied with that. They had to beat me, too. They punched, they kicked, they hit me with their staffs. And I could hear them laughing at me. Laughing when I cried out in pain. Laughing when I spit up blood. Laughing when I begged for mercy. My begging just seemed to make them be even more vicious. And then it stopped, as quickly as it began, and they were gone. And I was alone. I could feel the sun beating down on my skin. Every part of me hurt. And when I opened my eyes, I could see the birds circling overhead. I would be their food tonight, I guess. I just hope I die before they begin their feast.

Maybe you know someone that's happened to. Or maybe not quite so bad, but almost. Or maybe you feel like that - attacked and beat up - maybe not physically, but mentally, or emotionally. You didn't expect it. You were minding your own business, just going about your life . . . and you got knocked down, and kicked when you were down, taken advantage of, had others laugh at your pain. *Why?* And you feel very alone. And vulnerable. And wonder who's going to come by next to pick at you? And death seems almost preferable to life.

That's not how God created the world. It is what sin has done to it. To us. What's the first story in the Bible after the Fall into sin? When Cain killed his brother, Abel. Crime, violence, wars, selfishness. It never ends. Satan struck down Adam and Eve and then left them for dead, laughing with glee. And ever since . . .

Well, I don't know how long I'd been lying there, it seemed like an eternity. Everything was so quiet and still . . . until I heard something. Footsteps! Someone was coming down the road! I forced myself to open my eyes - well, one of them, anyway. One was swollen shut. So I couldn't quite focus, but I could tell from his clothing that he was a priest! Yes! Surely he would stop and help me. For I remembered . . . just a couple of

*days ago, on the Sabbath, hearing verses from Leviticus read, those verse you heard today, about **loving your neighbor as yourself**. A priest would know that. Surely a priest would do that. Maybe my fate was not to be bird food after all . . .*

But . . . but wait! What? He's crossing over to the other side of the road! He's . . . he's not stopping. I wanted to cry out, but my mouth was too dry, and I didn't have enough strength to do even that. I couldn't believe it. A priest! Really . . . ?

Maybe you've been *there*, too. There are people in this world God has given to help us, and we expect to help us, people we thought we could count on, be on our side . . . but they don't. It might even seem like they go out of their way not to help! (Sigh)

Or maybe you've been that one who didn't help. Well, not maybe, right? I'm too busy, don't want to be bothered, have other responsibilities, others need me, I just can't. I'm scared to! For what if I'm next! What if they do that to me! So you close your eyes, keep going, walk away, think about other things . . . Someone else will do it. Really?

I think I felt one of those birds on my leg . . . Go away bird! I'm not dead yet! I wanted to shoo him off, but I couldn't even do that. Every time I tried to move it just hurt; stabbing pains. But then the bird flew off . . . because . . . here comes someone else! The bird got scared. It's a Levite! Not a priest, but a close cousin to the priests. Maybe the priest had sent him back to help me! He didn't ignore me after all! Right? . . . Right . . . ?

I watched as he got smaller and smaller in the distance . . . Another one . . . I guess this is it. This is how it ends for me . . . Nobody cares. Nobody will help.

I think I must have passed out, for the next thing I remember is my leg moving. But it wasn't a critter grabbing it - it wasn't a bite. It was . . . gentle. And I heard a voice: Mac, Mac, you alright? You alive? I opened my one eye and looked at him - or tried to, anyway. I think he noticed, for he mumbled something and then began cleaning off my wounds. I felt the stinging of the wine, then the soothing of the oil. He gave me some of his water to drink. I saw him take off some of his own clothes to wrap my wounds . . . I couldn't believe it. I must be dreaming. But when he lifted me up and put me on his donkey and the pain wracked every part of my body, I knew I wasn't dreaming. The birds would have to find their food somewhere else today! I was going to be alright, I thought.

*But still, I had nothing. They had taken everything. Those robbers hadn't left me even a shred of clothing. How was I going to live? So when this man took me to an inn, I opened my mouth to object - I couldn't pay for this! But he did. **He paid**. And then he said he'd pay more if he had to! And I just looked at him . . . so good, so kind, so*

generous, so merciful, so compassionate, so unselfish and loving. And then when he looked at me looking at him . . . he just smiled. Just a little smile. A contented smile. Almost as if his helping was normal . . . was why he was there. Like it gave him more joy than it gave me!

Maybe you've been here, too. Someone helped when no one else would. Someone you didn't expect showed kindness and compassion . . .

You go, and do likewise, That's what Jesus said to the lawyer He told this parable to. But don't rush to that conclusion and moralize this parable; make it all about just being good and keeping the Law. That's what the lawyer wanted to do, and what he wanted Jesus - who he called ***teacher*** - to teach him. Just tell me what to do. But he knew what to do. So Jesus instead told this parable, so there's more to it than that.

Yes, the lawyer knew the Law. He answered Jesus correctly. **But if he knew it, why didn't he do it?** Which is the question for us, too. You're been catechized. You know the Law. You know that's what God wants you to do and the way to life. And yet you don't. Maybe sometimes, but not enough - am I right? You and I . . . we pass by those in need. Pretend to not see. You just don't want to. Or we make up an excuse - we're very good at that! **We don't, because we can't and we won't.** That's what sin has done to us. It has made us *unable* to help and *unwilling* to help. Sin has hardened our hearts. Sin has made it all about me. We see that in the priest and the Levite. They were in just as critical condition as the man on the road. They were the *walking* dead. Dead in their sins. With hardened hearts. Dead in looking for life where it can't be found. Like that Lawyer. ***What must I do to inherit eternal life? is a dead man's question.***

But a dying man doesn't ask that question. He can't. There's nothing he *can* do. There's only one hope for him: that *someone* will come to him and help. *Someone* will care. *Someone* will have mercy and compassion. *Someone* will provide a water that washes our wounds and their infection and gives life. *Someone* will speak to us and not just silently walk by. *Someone* will provide for us a place where we can rest and be fed. *Someone* will pay for our care. *Someone* will give us life with His own life. *Someone* . . . Someone more than a ***teacher***. Someone who came to be our neighbor, in all the ways that word can mean. To rescue us from the robber of our life. Someone, as Paul told the Colossians, to ***deliver us from [this] domain of darkness and transfer us to [a] kingdom . . . where we have redemption*** - where someone paid for us - and we have ***forgiveness***, healing for our sins. If only there was *someone* to do that for us . . . so that our *can't* and *won't* be changed to *can* and *will*.

Well, little by little, I regained my strength, until finally the day came when I could leave and return home. I was scared, I will tell you! I didn't want to step back on that

road, pass that spot, where all that happened! But that was the way home, so I did. The innkeeper gave me supplies for my journey - food, drink, even another donkey! Said someone had paid for them. Well, I knew who it was. I couldn't believe it! But I knew. It was amazing - all I'd been through, all I'd received . . .

*And I felt different. Like something in me changed. What was so important to me before, didn't seem so important anymore. It was as if I was looking at life all different now. Better. With new eyes. With a new . . . heart. Like I had been healed of far more than just my physical injuries. My faith had been restored. So many thoughts I had, as I started this new phase of my life . . . No! As I started my **new life** I'd been given.*

Well, it didn't take long, for as I was going down that road, I saw that those robbers were still at it! I saw another man lying on the road just as I had! The memories came flooding back. Oh man, was I scared! What if they were still around and would do that to me again? I thought about passing by . . . and quickly! But how could I? How could I?

When I arrived at the inn - yup, the same one I had just left! - with this man on my donkey, suddenly I thought of something: I didn't have any money! I couldn't pay for his care, as that stranger, that Samaritan (I later learned), had paid for mine. What was I going to do? What was I going to say? Was I going to be a failure?

Well, the innkeeper came out to greet us, and smiled. I'd seen that smile before. It was the same smile the stranger who helped me gave me! And with that, I wasn't worried anymore. It was like everything was going to work out; everything would be fine. And when I finally got up the courage to tell him I didn't have any money to pay for this man, for his care, he said to me: that's okay. Someone had paid for it all!

Someone! The *someone* who helped me. The *someone* who gave all He had for me. The *someone* who washed me, cared for me, fed me, gave me life. This too! He did it not just for me, but for all people!

Not just *someone*. The only one who could. He was royalty, and treated me as royalty. So now maybe I could do the same. Just a little. Not the same as Him, but a little. To love as He loved me. To care as He cared for me. **You go, and do likewise.** How could I not? Not to gain life, but **because He gave me life!** A new life to live. Back from the dead. He paid for it all, with all He had, on a cross. So me? Now? Now I can. Now I will. Because of *someone* . . . And you know who it was! Someone, named Jesus.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds

through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.