

Dancing With Grace

Key Passages:

- Deuteronomy 30:9-14 – Love is not baffling, not too far out of reach. It is near, in your mouth and in your heart.
- Colossians 1:1-14 – No matter where we are in the timeline, we have already been rescued from the power of darkness.
- Luke 10:25-37 – The first response is always love, in God and in you. The Samaritan shows us how to live, how to love.

Summary:

In the face of overwhelming stories of violence both in the United States and in the world, we don't know what to do, where to begin. Ultimately, we are to do one thing: Learn to love ... God, ourselves, our neighbor.

Sermon Notes:

This week, the world has exploded in violence. Horrendous videos, crazy rifle attacks – not just here, but everywhere in the world. How do we respond?

A recent visit with my family in South Carolina reminded me that I grew up in a place where violence has long existed and remains, a result of systemic prejudice and discrimination. This darkness is too close, so my response has been to leave. David Brown, Dallas police chief, said: "All I know is that this must stop, this divisiveness ..." Gandhi is quoted as saying, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." For all of us, the escalation of violence is keeping us from seeing what true life is and what a proper response the world might be.

Colossians offers some guidance. Paul says we were rescued from the darkness, but the Greek translation of the word for "rescued" shows us that no matter where we are in the timeline, this has already happened. It's been done for us by God in the gift of Jesus. Thus, the proper response to all things is to love as Jesus loved – first God, but also your neighbor as yourself. Love is the proper response to all things, even violence.

Today's Gospel reading is a proclamation of who we are and how we should live. By looking at the pattern, the process, and the response of the characters in this story of the Good Samaritan, we learn how we can be in today's world of violence, hatred and divisiveness. While the "power people" in the story have learned to look past the victim, judging them is itself an act of violence and does not help us to build compassion. Instead, one who is normally judged and perhaps would not be expected to have a great capacity for compassion is not afraid, draws close, and begins the work of healing with his own hands. He transports the wounded one to a place where healing can begin, stays with him, then pays to insure that healing will continue, no matter the cost.

Even seeing what we can do, it's hard. How do we begin in a world that makes us doubt love is even possible? The good news is Doubt has a dancing partner: Grace. We can learn to dance with Grace and let her lead. Heard recently about a local church that posts everywhere: "You are welcome here." No matter what, no judgement, only love. We are all here to learn to do one thing – learn to love – but we need help. So in the dance with grace, in the lessons of love, we can sit together, without judgement, and learn together.

Take-away:

We are to do one thing in response to violence, hatred and divisiveness: Learn to Love.