

JULY 13, 2019 SUMMARY SERMON - JOHN TSCHUDY

SCRIPTURE LESSON COLOSSIANS 1:1-14, LUKE 10:25-37

This is a reminder that what we refer to as “The Letters of Paul to...” are exactly that-letters. While letters took a different form in those days, they served the same purpose of conveying news and information to people far away. They were delivered by hand and some of the minor players we see in scripture served the important job of delivering these letters from the writer Paul to whatever church it was sent to. It seems that sometimes Paul would send the same letter, with perhaps minor variations to more than one church. Paul starts this message with a clear promise of Hope in the Gospel. Central to the early churches message was the hope of salvation and God’s love and help in our lives in this world. This is a reminder of two truths about the early church members. Many of them faced conflict and persecution with both the Romans and the Jews and many of them were poor. To both Paul offers a better life and God’s love, as well as the support of the other Christians. This is why this letter begins to call the early Christians to a life that “Bears Fruit” and gives positive witness to God’s way. God has offered to us the promise of a life of love, forgiveness, and hope but we must strive to live it according to God’s way. We should also remember that the Nation of Israel were the “Chosen people of God! They were chosen to receive God’s blessings but also chosen to be an example to other people how God wanted all people to live in this world. And we are called to give witness to God and God’s way of living. It is when we have the Faith to live this way that we find our salvation.

Traditionally I don’t know if there is a better known story of Jesus than the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The conflict between the Jews of Jerusalem and Judah and the Samaritans was long standing and bitter as conflicts within extended families often are. Both sides claimed to worship the same God and claimed family ties back to Jacob and Abraham. The problem was the Samaritans lived in northern Israel and claimed that the proper place to worship God was at Bethany where Jacob was buried and had dug a well. The Jews claimed that God had commanded David to rebuild the kingdom around the capital of Jerusalem upon a holy mountain Mt Zion. The hatred was bitter and often the fighting was vicious.

Yet in this story Jesus has a Samaritan taking great risk to help a badly injured Jew after two Jews walked by without helping him. A part of the debate over the meaning of this story is excuses can be found for the Jewish religious leaders not stopping to help the injured man. But I’m not sure that issue has that big of a role in the story. The point is for some reason neither of them stopped and helped the man. Only the Samaritan offered any help and then was very generous. Let’s be clear there was a risk to the Samaritan. First off he is traveling in Jewish territory, which meant the neighborhood was hostile to him. But also the road was known to be a dangerous stretch to travel and he was taking a great risk going towards the side of the road to help the injured man.

Thus a part of the story is not just that we are to help our enemy and care about them but also we are to do so when there is the risk of our own safety. This all fits with the idea that serving God and each other is to be the most important things in our lives. Some today want to put maintaining our own safety and comfort before doing the will of God. Yet over and over again Jesus calls us to care about others more than our selves. The old teaching about being willing to pick up our own cross to follow Christ is meant to be a call to be willing to sometimes take great risks to follow Christ if that is what God calls us to do today. But many are sure Jesus didn’t mean that, just like God didn’t mean it when Adam and Eve were told to keep their hands off the fruit of the tree. Having the faith needed for salvation means believing what God says even when it doesn’t make a lot of sense in terms of this world. But hey the snake knew what he was talking about and so do those who tell us that we don’t have to take risks in the name of

God and Jesus Christ-Don't They? Or that our first and most important concern is our own safety and security.