

Fifteenth Sunday of the Year – July 14, 2019

Deuteronomy 30: 10-14 Colossians 1: 15-20 Luke 10: 25-37

In what we heard this morning, Saint Luke continues to tell us of Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. This is the farm work he is using in order to describe what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Today we heard of an encounter that Jesus had along the way.

✘ The stage is set for the very clear teaching of Jesus in Moses describing the expectations of God as simple. He states that commands of God are neither remote nor mysterious. Actually, those commands are very close to us and very basic because God's has given us the ability to love. We are to love God and we are to love our neighbor. But there is a problem. To love makes a demand on us. It is a demand that we are frequently reluctant to hear.

The love of God eventually involves a complete surrender of ourselves to God. The more and more we come to know God, the more we realize the totality of God's love for us. We come to realize that the only fitting response is one of total love in return. It is a love that does not question God. It is love that gives itself selflessly to God. It is a love that does not attempt to control God with what we want, or how we want things to be, or what we want for ourselves. It is a love which gives itself over totally to God. It is a love that constantly seeks to reveal the goodness of God. But our instincts are to hold on to ourselves, to protect ourselves.

We are hesitant to let go of ourselves so completely.

Love of neighbor, as Jesus responds to the question that is asked of him, is a sign of our love for God. Jesus told the story of the Samaritan. What makes this particularly significant is that we need to remember that, earlier in this journey, the Samaritans had rejected him. It is quite hard to miss the point of the story told by Jesus because the imagery is graphic. Like in the parable, there all sorts of excuses which each of us can use for saying that we do not need to love our neighbor. Perhaps this is because of what they may have said or done to us. Or it is because we cannot expect much of a response from them in return. Or it may be because of their origin, their color, their beliefs. We can go on and on with excuses.

The one who received the Lord's recognition in this story is the one who did not look for excuses. He simply lived out the commands of the Lord in a concrete situation.

We, however, continue to make excuses. We want to protect ourselves. To give ourselves in love makes us vulnerable. Perhaps we will not be understood. Perhaps we will be rejected. We certainly do not want that to happen. Perhaps if we give, even more will be demanded.

To give ourselves completely to God or to another is not simple. In fact, it is difficult. Yet this is the challenge before us. This is the way in which we reveal and reflect our good and gracious God.