

## **Reading Luke 10:29-37**

Our first reading this morning comes from the Book of Luke in the Bible, chapter 10, verses 29-37

29. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?  
30. And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.  
31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.  
32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.  
33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,  
34. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.  
35. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.  
36. Which now of these three thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?  
37. And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

## **Reading**

Wisdom from Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones **by Langston Hughes**

And these are the words of Langston Hughes' fictional character, Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones.

"I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son – neither would I tell God, if He didn't already know. Everybody's got something in common."

## **Homily**

Let me begin with a little confession [aside, confidential, "It's a good device"]. When the Worship Team was planning for the various holiday services, I jumped at the chance to be in the pulpit today. Why? Because I already had a service "in the can", as the film people like to say, from the Sunday after Thanksgiving in 2009, and so I thought it would be a relatively easy task to put something together for today.

So yes, that's right, on the Sunday after Thanksgiving, I'm serving you leftovers.

I do not apologize – because leftovers are delicious.

And I do not apologize – because “The Good Samaritan”, from the book of Luke, and “Thank you, M'am”, by Langston Hughes, are fantastic stories – arguably sermons in and of themselves, and I believe that sharing them is definitely “the stuff of Church”.

And here's how this sharing is going to play out this morning. First, I will talk about a few things that I find salient about “The Good Samaritan” – bullet points, if you will. I make no claims as to their originality.

Then we'll dive into “Thank you, M'am”, but not before I give you a brief language arts assignment.

And then, after that story ends, I'll say “amen”, and we'll close out the service as usual with a hymn, benediction, and postlude – all that jazz. [pause] So...

### **Some thoughts about “The good Samaritan”**

- First, who were the Samaritans? The Samaritans were (and still are) a non-Jewish religious sect. They were definitely “other” to Jesus' audience. In contrast, the Priest and the Levite who passed by on the other side of the road in the story were definitely of the clan and of the faith.
- Second, the Samaritan is on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, a known “bad neighborhood”, and he apparently frequents this road, as he tells the innkeeper “When I come again, I'll repay thee”. So he's not \*looking\* to help anybody; he's not a \*quest\* to help anybody. He just meets the victim where they both happen to be.
- Third, the Samaritan is not thanked in the story, nor is there any evidence that he wants to be thanked, nor does the Samaritan enter into any kind of further relationship with the victim. He takes care of him, arguably saving his life, and he moves on.
- And finally, fourth, as I was putting this together I wondered how the adjective “good” came to be placed in front of Samaritan? Is the default Samaritan somehow “bad”, so that we have to differentiate? To me, that reeks of “Some of my best friends” racism. I tried to ask the internet about this, but, perhaps surprisingly, it wasn't that easy to suss out. I would like to emphasize that in this famous passage, Jesus uses the completely generic

qualifier “certain”, as in “ a certain man”, “a certain Samaritan”, and “a certain Priest”.

That’s all I’ve got on “The Good Samaritan” this morning.

Except this: “Thank You, M’am” is another “Good Samaritan” story. Now I don’t want to spoil it with pre or post-game analysis, and I don’t want to delay much more before its telling, so, as you listen to the story, I ask you to think about what roles are played by what characters: the victim, the thieves, the passers-by, the Samaritan – I say that they are all represented, sometimes in surprising and subtle ways.