

5th Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday, July 13, 2025

Introduction to the day

To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind is to reflect God's mercy in responding to one's neighbor. That mercy found its most profound expression in the "gospel that has come to you"—namely the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That gospel mercy comes to us again today: at the font, at the table, and from the pulpit. It is very near to you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

O Lord God, your mercy delights us, and the world longs for your loving care. Hear the cries of everyone in need, and turn our hearts to love our neighbors with the love of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

FIRST LESSON: Deuteronomy 30:9-14

Moses calls the people who are about to enter the promised land to renew the covenant God made with their ancestors. Through this covenant God gives life and asks for obedience. God's commandment is neither burdensome nor too far off, but dwells in the people's hearts.

PSALM: Psalm 25:1-10

Show me your ways, O LORD, and teach me your paths. (Ps. 25:3)

SECOND LESSON: Colossians 1:1-14

The letter to the Colossians was written to warn its readers of various false teachings. The first part of the letter is an expression of thanks for the faith, hope, and love that mark this community, including a prayer for strength and courage.

GOSPEL: Luke 10:25-37

Jesus is challenged to explain what is involved in obeying the greatest commandment. He tells a parable rich in surprises: those expected to show pity display hard hearts while the lowly give and receive unexpected and lavish mercy.

GOSPEL MESSAGE - Who Is the Good Samaritan?

The story of the good Samaritan is well known, even outside Christian communities. Some ministries are even named after it. However, showing love and care to others, especially strangers, can be complex. Like the lawyer who comes to Jesus in today's gospel, many seek to learn how to live a life of integrity. Answering the call to love God with all one's heart, mind, and soul, however, often leads to questions about what that means in the real world. This parable calls listeners to generosity in extending care beyond charitability and helps expand the definition of *neighbor*. There continues to be a steady increase in homelessness and poverty in our country, and loving a neighbor as a "good Samaritan" can often feel impossible. Nevertheless, we are still called to care for the most vulnerable.

Alongside care, another dynamic emerges from this encounter between Jesus and the lawyer. This is also a story about Jesus expanding the notion of who is capable and "good." By highlighting an unlikely character who does the good thing, Jesus' answer to the lawyer's question, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29), gives the lawyer a chance to think about the stranger as just as capable of love as he is. Loving is not exclusive to a specific type of person; we are all capable of it.

The invitation, then, is not just to love the stranger who walks through the church doors, but to see them as just as capable of bringing love with them. Loving God with one's entire being also means trusting that everything God has made, especially our neighbor, has the potential to be an extension of divine love. Seeing others as just as capable of being the good Samaritan as we are diminishes the societal hierarchies and judgments that keep us from sharing in the splendor of God's love with one another. So, like the lawyer, may we be surprised by the generous care of a stranger as we seek to do the same.

THE PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

In solidarity with all creation, we join our voice to the voice of the whole church and pray for the needs of the world.

Saving God, awaken your church to your truth as it follows your path of love. Encourage pastors, deacons, teachers, and seminarians, and lead them as they seek to learn your ways. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Prosper the harvests of fruit-bearing bushes, trees, and plants. Uphold farmers and farm workers as they labor through summer days, and bring relief to lands that are parched with heat. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Instill in leaders of the world a strong love for their neighbors. Compel them to govern with equity and to give aid and protection to people who are vulnerable, especially strangers, migrants, and asylum seekers. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Draw near to people in need of help, comfort, and healing especially Shirley Glickman, Donna L. Hoffman, Cassie Jessup, Glenda Panke, Barry Rogers, Marilyn Schneider, Danny Schultz, Doug Sell, Debbie Thom, Keith Weckwerth, and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. Provide protection and aid to children who are unsafe and undernourished while on summer break. In this moment of silence, we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts, those who need your healing touch. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Go with all who travel, and protect them from harm. Put in their paths people who offer aid. We pray especially for the safety of first responders. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We give you thanks for all who have gone before us and have made your love known. Help us to follow their witness as we await our share in the inheritance of the saints. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Trusting in your lovingkindness, we place our prayer and hope in you, in the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (WOV p. 52)

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

BLESSING (WOV p. 53)

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen**

DISMISSAL (WOV p. 53)

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

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