

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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In today's first lesson Moses promises abundance and prosperity to the Israelites, if they will just turn to God with all their heart and soul, and then adds that the command is not too hard for them or too far off.

- ❖ In fact, it's really pretty easy to understand: God has an eternal plan, and his eternal plan is for us to know how much he delights in us.
- ❖ We were created to know his love and, once we do, we share in the delight of making it known.
- ❖ Everything comes back to that.

So turning to God with everything we have is not a lofty, impossible ideal or some foreign concept – it's what we were made for, it's where we find our deepest purpose.

- ❖ And Moses encourages us by saying, “the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, *so that you can do it.*”

Of course, the first thing that pops into our heads is,

- ❖ If it's so easy to understand, why don't we get it?
- ❖ And if he gives us the power to do it, why don't we?

Because we get caught up in ourselves and in the stream of our own activities.

- ❖ Now, That's not to say that the normal, daily concerns of our lives aren't important – they are, because God's working through them too.
- ❖ But if we don't keep reorienting our lives to knowing God's love and making it known, things that really are secondary can begin to seem more and more urgent.
- ❖ If we don't break out of that, it becomes difficult, even impossible, for us to tell the difference, and that's what's going on in today's gospel lesson.

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Luke makes it clear that it's not really the law itself that this lawyer is trying to figure out.

- ❖ He knows the commandments, but he keeps asking questions because he's looking for a loophole; he wants to know where to draw the line.
- ❖ And so Jesus gives him a parable with some options.

That's what the priest and the Levite are doing – they're drawing lines.

- ❖ Maybe it's the code for ritual purity, part of which is avoiding dead bodies.
- ❖ Maybe it's just being prudent, knowing that that someone pretending to be in need was a common trick for robbers.
- ❖ And those would be reasonable places to draw lines...but they don't show how much God loves us.

You see, God is looking for opportunities to love, not limits, and that's what the Samaritan does.

Now, since Jesus tells us, "Go, and do likewise," so let's be clear about what's happened here.

- ❖ The Samaritan wasn't searching for someone to care for, he's on his way somewhere else.
 - But he's not so consumed with that that he can't respond to the need that God put in his path.
- ❖ And while his response to this man's need is radically generous, it's not ridiculous.
 - He doesn't nurse him back to health, he doesn't organize a fundraiser to get him back on his feet, he doesn't set up a mutual fund so that he'll always be taken care of.
 - He sees an immediate, urgent need, does what's in his power to meet it, and continues on.

The point is that while God never puts limits on his love for us, we can trust him to draw lines for us.

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- ❖ He won't lead us to a need that we can't meet or ask for something we don't have to give.
- ❖ So don't be afraid to let God use you to reveal his love – it will always be out of love for you too.

Still, if you find that the urgent stream of things keeps sweeping you away, don't worry. Ask God for help.

- ❖ Ask him to open your eyes and your heart to see the people you meet the way that he sees them.
- ❖ Ask him to help you give them what he wants you to give them, to say what he wants you to say to them, and for you to hear from them what he wants to say to you.

If we just keep doing that, we'll see more and more the love that he has for us and all that he's done, and still does for us.

- ❖ Then, little by little, the weight of that love will give us some strength and peace, some stability in the stream of secondary things.
- ❖ And his love will be what flows out into the lives of those around us.