

**A Sermon for the 5th Sunday after Pentecost
July 13, 2025**



Gustav Dore

Rev. Barbara Bond
New Life Episcopal Church, Uniontown, OH

Guest Preacher: Debbie Likens-Fowler

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[Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – The Episcopal Church](#)

It is always a privilege and a joy for me to be a guest homilist here at New Life. Sharing the pulpit in a church that is not my home parish is an opportunity that I don't take lightly. Please know that I always appreciate your kind hospitality.

Now, will you pray with me:

"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."¹

This year, 2025, commemorates the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. We are on the cusp of observing of what has been dubbed "the month that changed the world," from July 16 to August 15, 1945. Among the momentous 'victorious' landmarks for the United States between those two dates were the 'Trinity' Test, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Japan's Surrender.²

However, not all was triumphant. On the morning of August 2, 1945, a U.S. Anti-submarine patrol plane, with guns locked and loaded, was on patrol in the Philippine Sea, on a routine sector search. The pilot, Lt. Chuck Gwinn, spotted a winding slick of fuel oil. Wondering what might have caused such a large amount of oil, he decided to investigate, not knowing what he might find. Decreasing his altitude, he saw what looked like 'coconuts' floating on the top of the oil, and then

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"ELCA Prayer of the Day for Sun. July 13 – Fifth Sunday after Pentecost - Lectionary 15," Year C 2024/2025, 2025,

https://elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/YearC_24-25TimeAfterPentecost.pdf

2

"The Month That Changed The World: July 16–August 15, 1945," Don't Know Much About, 2020, Rev. July 11,

2025. <https://dontknowmuch.com/2025/07/the-month-that-changed-the-world/>

those 'coconuts' waved to him! Realizing the 'coconuts' were actually people in the water, he made another two more passes, dipped his airplane wings so they knew he had seen them, then radioed for emergency help.³

Unbeknownst to him at that time, he had stumbled onto survivors of the USS Indianapolis, which had been torpedoed by a Japanese submarine in the wee hours of July 30, four days earlier. The Indy carried a crew of almost 1,200. Roughly 900 of them had survived the initial explosion, and abandoned ship, only to find themselves adrift in the Philippine Sea for over three days. Thirst and dehydration, wounds, exhaustion, despair, and sharks had all taken a fearful toll.⁴

The rapid sinking of the ship – which took only 12 minutes – and critical damage to communication systems prevented the sending of a distress signal. Coupled with misunderstandings of protocol for reporting the non-arrivals of ships, no one in the Philippines knew that Indianapolis was missing. So, the Navy had not initiated any kind of search and rescue operations for the ship and her crew.⁵

In the end, only 316 crew members survived, and 875 were lost, resulting in one of the largest losses of life for a single US Navy ship in the entire war. Had it not been for the actions of Lt. Gwinn flying that anti-submarine patrol plane, the final number of survivors could easily have been much lower. ⁶

Taking into account the time difference of almost two millennia, the predicament in which those 20th century sailors and marines found themselves seems comparable to that of the seriously wounded traveler in today's Lukan Gospel text.

3

"USS Indianapolis: The Final Chapter," PBS, Season 2019, Episode 1, January 8, 2019, video, 85:37,

<https://www.pbs.org/video/uss-indianapolis-the-final-chapter-aabbsw/>

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"USS Indianapolis: The Final Chapter," PBS.

⁵"USS Indianapolis: The Final Chapter," PBS.

⁶“USS Indianapolis: The Final Chapter,” PBS.

That first century man had been robbed beaten, stripped of his clothing, and left half dead along the side of a dangerous road.

The story is commonly known, and loved, as the parable of the Good Samaritan. As New Testament scholar and Lutheran pastor Richard Swanson recently observed, Everybody, yes EVERYBODY, knows this story.⁷

I would add that this

story is rich, strong, and complex! Besides Jesus and the traveler badly wounded by some robbers, characters include a cheeky lawyer, a couple of clergy ‘villains,’ and an unlikely hero. The plot is actually a story within a story, with a great literary twist (which is common for parables). Linguistically, the meaning of one of the Greek words is different from how that word translates into English.

So, in the interests of simplicity, I am going to focus on one thing. Borrowing again from Richard Swanson, “...the genius of this parable is its emphasis on doing, not on being.”⁸ Although there’s nothing ‘wrong’ with trying to figure out what the ‘noun’ neighbor means in this context, I want to emphasize that ‘neighboring’ is a verb, it’s something we DO.

So, let’s go back and listen to the story again. I’m borrowing the translation from the music video for this story that American Bible Society created almost 30 years ago. So it’s going to sound a bit different from what we all just heard from very formal New Revised Standard Version (which is also printed in your bulletin.) Pay attention to what jumps out at you audibly and resonates inwardly, especially since you cannot follow along with the written words. I will read the frame story that gives rise to Jesus’ parable, and Rev. Barbara is going to read the parable itself.

⁷ Richard Swanson, “A Provocation: Season After Pentecost, Proper 10(15): July 13, 2025: Luke 10:25-37,” [provokingthegospel](https://provokingthegospel.wordpress.com/2025/06/26/a-provocation-season-after-pentecost-proper-1015-july-13-2025-luke-1025-37/provokingthegospel), <https://provokingthegospel.wordpress.com/2025/06/26/a-provocation-season-after-pentecost-proper-1015-july-13-2025-luke-1025-37/>

8Swanson, "A Provocation".

When Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem, an expert in the Law of Moses came up and tested Jesus with a question: "Teacher, what deed must I do to have eternal life?"

Jesus answered, "What does the Law of Moses say? How do YOU understand it?"

The expert replied, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind,' and also, 'Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.'"

Jesus said to him, "You have given the right answer. Keep doing this and you will live."

But the expert, wanting to make himself look good, asked Jesus, "And who IS my neighbor?" Jesus answered with a story:

A man was going down the mountain road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by a gang of robbers who stripped him of everything, beat him up, and ran off, leaving him half dead.

By chance a priest was going down that road. But when he saw the man, he went by on the other side.

In the same way a temple official came along. When he saw the man, he also went by on the other side.

Then a foreigner from Samaria traveling along that road happened upon the man. And when he saw him, he was filled with compassion and went to help. He treated his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. He put him on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.

The next morning he paid the innkeeper and said, "Take care of this man, and if it costs more than this, I will pay you when I return."

Then Jesus asked, “Which one of these three people do you think acted like a neighbor to the man who was attacked by the gang of robbers?”

The expert answered, “The one who acted with compassion.”

Then Jesus said to him, “You go and do the same.”

Now, you may have noticed that Jesus offers no guidelines about how to “Go and do the same.” There are no additional instructions with his command, which is very different from what he specified to the seventy he sent out in last week’s Gospel. If the Samaritan is our model, how exactly do we “go and do the same”? To answer that question, Lutheran pastor David Lose has discerned an important pattern, with three parts:

1. Remember Lt. Gwinn, the pilot in 1945? He saw something unusual that gave him pause, and so he decided to investigate.

The Samaritan saw the man in need, when he was invisible to the priest and temple official who passed him by. Although they glanced at him very briefly, they then promptly ignored him. They did NOT see him as a neighbor. Rather they likely perceived him to be a burden, and perhaps even a threat. Maybe they were afraid that something bad might happen to them. How often, in conversations about refugees, have we been tempted not to see them as human beings and neighbors, but as burdens and potential threats⁹ or maybe even as sub-human?

⁹ David Lose, “Pentecost 8 C: The God We Didn’t Expect”, Dear Partner, July 4, 2016, <https://www.davidlose.net/2016/07/pentecost-8-c-the-god-we-didnt-expect/>

2. Back to Lt. Gwinn. He knew he needed to be closer to that strange oil slick, so he decreased the altitude of his plane, not knowing how much risk he might be taking. For all he knew, the oil on the water had come from an enemy ship.

The Samaritan not only saw the man in need as a neighbor, but he then drew near to him, coming over to help. The priest and temple worker had given this needy man a wide berth, creating even more distance between them. But the Samaritan instead went to him, and became vulnerable in that closeness.

Vulnerable in case it was some kind of a trap, but even more so, vulnerable in opening himself to see his pain, misery, and need. Again, how often are we frightened to come close to others simply because we do not want to bear their pain, to be open to their need?¹⁰ Or maybe, we don't know how to respond.

3. After getting close enough to know exactly what he was seeing, Lt. Gwinn knew that the overarching priority was to get those sailors out of the water as quickly as possible. So, he radioed the information to others who had equipment he did not have. Maybe he thought of his presence as being serendipity or synchronicity. But, I would like to think that something deep inside him urged him to act, and act quickly.

After seeing the wounded man up close, the Samaritan had compassion on him, tended his wounds, and transported him to an inn, making sure he was taken care of. Now, as a linguistic aside, the English word "compassion" is a peculiar word, because we lose something in translation. The original Greek word is actually related to one's stomach, bowels, or viscera. So, what helps me is to think about "compassion" as a 'gut feeling,' i.e., to act on someone else's behalf. Seeing is vital, drawing near imperative, yet the final and meaningful

¹⁰ Lose, "Pentecost 8 C."

gesture is that both Lt. Gwinn and the Samaritan actually did something about the situation in which they found themselves, they acted on their knowledge. Something profound, from deep inside, compelled both of them to put empathy into action. And these three inter-related moves – seeing, drawing near, and having compassion – offer us an example¹¹ of what it means to be the hands and feet of Jesus, what it means to freely give to someone else the grace that God has freely offered to us.

In his last speech, on the evening before he was assassinated, Martin Luther King, Jr. referred to the parable of the Good Samaritan in this way:

“In my imagination, I hear the Priest and Levite saying, ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’”

“But then the Good Samaritan came by, and he reversed the question: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?’”¹²

These days compassion and mercy, kindness and tolerance, and empathy and caring are all in very short supply in our public discourse. Certain groups of people, especially if their skin color is black or brown, have been described in dishonest and degrading ways, as if they are a danger to the rest of us and do not belong in our communities.

You may recall that last January, the Rt. Rev. Mariann Budde, Bishop of Washington, D.C., preached at a Prayer Service for the Nation, held at the Washington National Cathedral one day after the inauguration. She chose to end that sermon with a plea for mercy and compassion directed to the 47th President.

¹¹ Lose, “Pentecost 8 C.”

¹² Martin Luther King, Jr., “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” Speech, delivered 3 April 1968, Mason Temple (Church of

God in Christ Headquarters), Memphis, Tennessee,

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm>

Specifically she enumerated several population cohorts that are exceptionally vulnerable and threatened by the current deportation policies:¹³

- gay, lesbian, and transgender children in Democratic, Republican, and Independent families, some who fear for their lives;
- immigrants, here legally and illegally, and by-in-large non-criminals, who pick our crops and clean our office buildings, who labor in poultry farms and meat packing plants, who wash the dishes after we eat in restaurants and work the night shifts in hospitals;
- those whose children fear that their parents will be taken away;
- those are fleeing war zones and persecution in their own lands.¹⁴

So, in the spirit of the compassion offered by both Lt. Gwinn to the suffering men in the water, and by the Samaritan to the critically injured man, I would like to propose that we – i.e., you and I – speak up in some fashion so that our voices are heard when we see people being mistreated. And, I'm not necessarily talking about words. Maybe you are adept with a camera, like the teenage who took a video of the policeman squeezing the breath out of George Floyd out on the street in 2020. Maybe you are skilled with a paintbrush or a musical instrument.

Whatever your skill may be, use it as a lens and as a tool to model what the Samaritan did: see what is happening, draw near to it, and do something. Then, speak up about it. Again quoting Bp. Budde, "Our greatest contribution as Christians is to ... testify to what we have seen."¹⁵

¹³ Sermon by the Rt. Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde, Jan. 21, 2025, Washington National Cathedral, YouTube,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwwaEuDeqM8>.

¹⁴ Sermon by the Rt. Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde.

¹⁵ Sermon by the Rt. Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde.

So now, in a time such as this, – borrowing once more from Richard Swanson – "who needs you and me to act as a neighbor?"¹⁶

Amen.