

*“But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ...”.*



One of the volunteers on Friday said that for him, the question of the lawyer sounded like somebody who wanted to break a contract. He sounded like someone who found a detail in the contract that would nullify it. If our covenant is with God, what is the life price of the one who lives outside of it? The lawyer would have tested Jesus, thinking probably that the only neighbour worthy of man's love is God alone because the covenant of the Jewish people was precisely with Him. What were they going to do with those who lived outside the law? After all, God asked them to separate from them. To keep a distance. And in this context, the contract would be void. How could we keep a covenant with you if we must love with the same love the one who is a sinner as we have to love You who are sinless? How can we love both with the same love, the One who is perfect together with the one that sins.

It is precisely what the parable clarifies at the end. The one who is a sinner, outside the law, has love in his heart. He is actually the only one who has mercy on you when you fell among the robbers. It is almost striking because in the parable the one outside of the covenant loves freely, whereas those who are directly bound by it betray it. Both for the priest and the Levite it was not only a matter of conscience to take care of the half dead person, but more than that, it was a covenantal responsibility. They should have known that God “desires mercy and not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6).

The parable reveals the truth that the love for the neighbour finds communion in his heart. It is never wasted and never spent in vain. It touches in the same way both the neighbour and myself, and it produces communion with each other. We can love our neighbour freely because the love in his heart is genuine. And at the right moment, when everybody else around abandons us to our own misfortune, this would be the only thing left that would bring consolation. Of course, this seems at times improbable and impossible. The sin of the neighbour appears to be too great (we see today in the worlds around us). That's why we need to trust God and to live within His covenant. It is through faith in Him that we nurture the love for our neighbour that, in time, will bring the good fruits of communion.

“And who is my neighbour that I can love him freely?” is the question that would be worth asking today. Because the answer could save many lives. But today it seems that we have no more a covenant with God. No curiosity of who our neighbor is and a complete conviction that he is the worst thing happening to us. And it would be better if we had to love only God. Because our neighbour has become His enemy, and everything left in the world is our love for Him that we need to save. And a new covenant is the last thing that can save God himself from destruction, Who does not understand the danger of the neighbour. If it is not God, then it is our

perfect civilization, or if it is not our perfect civilization, it is our misery or sorrow in us that needs to be saved. Because the neighbour is the cause of everything we have done wrong. Even though we see in the parable that it is actually our own robbers that take away life from us and we feel the deepest rejection from those who are called to care for us and to nurture us. Today, nobody asks this question anymore because the covenant has been changed already and we have become our own neighbour, left with no love for God, for those around us and for our own selves. Because the path we chose takes us to hell.

***“For God loves a cheerful giver.”*** (today epistle – II Corinthians 9:6-11)

Our reflection on Friday gravitated mostly around the Samaritan being a stranger. And what it meant to be a stranger in a strange land and how this vulnerable position moved the person to pay more attention to the suffering of the other. How many times the comfort of your own land and culture makes you insensitive because you do not lack much? Ozzy described with humor how at the mission he is listening attentively to what people have to say, even if at times the things they say are testing his patience. But most of the time everything is settled around a “double-double”. In Istanbul he would have no time for this nonsense dialogue, and he would have aggressively interrupted it. “It is because I became a refugee here and because of the hardships I went through, that destroyed my ego, that I can now see things differently and act differently. The difficulties I went through made me more human.”

The reflection went around the room, and we remembered how the refugees are of such great help today at the mission. As br Luke said, they come from shelters early in the morning or from very far away just to help. Or, like other foreign students, who sleep two hours a night just to come and find the joy of being a help for others. It makes them remember the time when they have experienced the mercy of the stranger. The time when they were lifted by the sensitivity of another person towards them. We concluded that we all need that. When we fall under the robbers, we cannot lift up ourselves. We need the kindness of the stranger because the rejection of those who pass by does not help us with the recovery.

One would wonder what was more damaging to the soul of the person who fell among the robbers. Was it the attack that left him half dead, that came from those who genuinely do not care about any law but their own interest, or was it the rejection of those who were supposed to care for him? Rejection is harmful no matter what, but for a half dead soul it could be devastating. However, it was for this soul to be the only beneficiary in the gospel of the mercy of the stranger. Of genuine love. In the end, this is what really prevails in our soul, no matter how many beatings and betrayals the soul may have experienced. The path to recovery for all of us is the mercy of God, reveals at times in the kindness of a stranger.

Mission church collections of 1 Sunday: Nov 5 2023, Church Donations \$105, Candle/wine \$40, Candles box \$124.15

**November 13 - 19**

<b>Tuesday</b>	8:30 am 7:30 pm	Morning Prayer Psalms Study – via zoom	<b>Wednesday</b>	4:00 pm 6:30 pm	Vespers Beginning of the Christmas fast - Great Compline
<b>Thursday</b>	8:30 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm	Morning Prayer Noon Hours Jesus Prayer	<b>Friday</b>	7:00 am 12:30pm 2:00pm	Orthros Noon Hours Jesus Prayer
<b>Saturday</b>	9:00am	Morning Prayer	<b>Sunday</b>	7:00 am 8:30 am	Orthros Divine Liturgy



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under  
 the Omophoron of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

St. Silouan Chapel, November 12, 2023

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