

OT XV © Sunday Homily > July 13th, 2025

Today's readings offer us a simple but powerful message: eternal life is found by loving God and loving our neighbor. But as Jesus teaches us through the parable of the Good Samaritan, being a neighbor is not about categories or boundaries - it is about compassion in action.

In the first reading from Deuteronomy, Moses reminds us that God's commandments are not distant or abstract. They are written in our hearts. God has planted within each of us the ability to love, to be just, to act with mercy. And the Psalm echoes that: *"Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live."* That "turning" is not just a cry for help - it is also a turning toward others in their need.

In the Gospel, when the scribe asks, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus gives a familiar answer: *"Love the Lord your God... and love your neighbor as yourself."* But the real heart of today's Gospel lies in the question that follows: *"Who is my neighbor?"*

And Jesus responds not with a definition, but with a story - a Samaritan who goes out of his way to help a man left for dead, while the religious leaders pass by. This parable overturns our comfort zones. The Samaritan, considered an outsider, becomes the true neighbor by showing compassion, not asking whether the man deserved help or belonged to the right group.

And this is where the message becomes personal.

We don't have to walk the road from Jerusalem to Jericho to find someone in need. That road passes through our homes, our schools, our parishes, our workplaces. It may be a friend carrying silent pain, a spouse burdened by stress, a child needing encouragement, or even a stranger who seems difficult to love.

The question is not, "Who qualifies as my neighbor?" but rather, "Am I willing to be a neighbor?" Am I willing to cross boundaries of race, politics, religion, and resentment to extend mercy?

St. Paul reminds us today that Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. And so are the people around us - each person carries the image of God. So, when we show compassion to others, especially those who are wounded or overlooked, we are loving God Himself.

Let us ask ourselves this week:

- Can I offer a kind word where there is bitterness?
- Can I be generous with my time, my attention, my forgiveness?
- Can I allow someone I've distanced myself from to become my neighbor again?

Let us also open ourselves to those who try to be Good Samaritans to us - those we may have misunderstood, judged, or even rejected.

Brothers and sisters, the commandment to love is not just a moral duty - it is God's invitation to share in His life. The more we love, the more we live. Let us pray today that the Spirit of the Living God will help us to love as Jesus loved - without limit, without fear, and without exception.