

ASC Proper 10C July 14, 2013 G. West

Everything in life is for each of us a lesson or an example which can have great meaning. I think often we do not see this and just let things fly by without seeing either the lesson or the example.

Some of you may know that I go to the Coatesville VA Medical Center for treatment for the many medical issues that I have. One of those treatments is attending a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder group which is a gathering of six to ten veterans who like myself have had mental fall-out issues from military service in Korea and Vietnam.

One in our group, Jimmie Moore, died as a result of a fire in his home on July 4<sup>th</sup> along with six members of a family he temporarily took into his home who had come on hard times. That family

was due to move into their own house on the very next day, July 5<sup>th</sup>. The four children of the parents in the home were ages 8, 6, 4, 2. He is survived by his mother, a former wife, nine children, twenty-three grandchildren, three great-grand children and eight siblings. Jimmie was only 64.

This brings me to an understanding of today's Gospel reading which is all too familiar to all of us—the story of the Good Samaritan. We all know the story of the nameless Samaritan: hospitals, clinics, and churches are named after the Good Samaritan although not a lot of Episcopal churches bear that name.

As we have been moving through these passages from the Gospel of Luke, we are being given lessons of about discipleship.

Several weeks back, we learn about situations where obedience is framed in terms of saying “yes,” saying “no,” and even the “yes but...”

Last week, Mary Beth, talked to you about the sending out of the 70. They were sent out in pairs and took nothing with them except a message. They were given a simple charge and they were warned that there might be rejection along the way.

When I heard this message in a Jacksonville, Florida church last Sunday, I kept thinking about how I often have reacted when in various times in my life that I was confronted with Jehovah’s Witnesses. In most of those confrontations I must admit that I rejected them and tried to quickly turn them away from my door. But they always came in twos; they usually always looked

the same dressed in slacks, a white shirt, and a tie carrying a Bible with many bookmarks. My rejection was more a question of disagreeing with their message rather than their sincerity. I have never felt comfortable in whether they really knew what the message should be and they were not open to any opinion which differed from their own.

If anything is true, it is true that Episcopalians have opinions which are not always in agreement even among some of us here today. There are, however, some constants for all of us. And those guidelines come from Jesus himself.

We are no longer bound to live our lives in terms of laws which merely follow a list of “do nots.” Our lives should be ruled by love. That love begins with the recognition that we must love the

Lord and in doing that we probably become aware of the fact that we love ourselves. And once that takes place we are able to love our neighbors.

The people who hear Jesus tell this story are surprised by the identity of its hero because Samaritans and more especially a “compassionate Samaritan” would be a contradiction in terms because Jews were considered to be the good guys and Samaritans are bad guys. There is no love between the two groups and even Jesus would not win any points for talking of a good Samaritan.

We would not be scandalized because the hero is a Samaritan and we probably would not recognize one if they walked into this church.

The Samaritan takes risks. He goes out of his way to help an injured stranger. He too could be

attacked for helping the stranger. He tends to the wounds of the victim and takes him to an inn spending hours watching over him. In the end, he leaves money to continue the care promising to return. He then leaves and we hear nothing further about him. We do not know whether the victim recovered or whether he was able to thank the Samaritan.

What we do know is that the Samaritan acts without any assurance that his efforts will be successful or even appreciated. There are no guarantees—absolutely none.

Compassion requires that we take risks and spend resources and do so without any promise of reward or even appreciation.

In a sense, we too are on the road from some Jerusalem to some Jericho and we cannot afford to

be delayed. Do we find it to be better to among those who pass by or do we stop and help the stranger?

Perhaps we are the victims, attacked by robbers, stripped, beaten, bloodied, and left half dead. We might be lying in the grass. Along comes someone to help us who we might despise but that person does not fear us. He takes risks and helps us with no guarantee we will ever thank him.

Jesus does not simply tell this story. He lives out this story. He is the first and foremost Samaritan. He spends his resources to heal us and does it freely. He takes us to an inn, a hospital, or some other place of safety and health and leaves us in the care of others. We may not deserve this care but it is freely given all the same.

May we show to others assaulted on life's road what he shows to us. We are asked to make that risky love which asks for nothing in return showing the love of a compassionate heart.

So I now return to my friend Jimmie Moore who was a true Samaritan. I am not clear about all the details of the event but learned that Jimmie had actually gotten out of the home but went back in to try to save others and he lost his life in that effort.

Oh, Jimmie was black and his house guests were white.

May his soul and the souls of the others who perished that night rest in peace and light perpetual shine upon all of them. Amen.