

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Oct 6th 2014

Who is My Neighbor?

“He lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn, and cared for him.” (Luke 10: 34)

The scholar was clever. He posed questions that might embellish his self-regard. Jesus told a story so that the wise man could recognize the answer himself. No tribe or religion or border defines my neighbor. When I look up from my daily hustle and listen, the lives of others come closer and compassion stirs. When I hurry to the far side of the road, indifference wins again.

John Kavanaugh, S.J., author of *Following Christ in a Consumer Society*, wrote that we all inhabit a gospel that reveals who we are. In capitalist society, the reigning gospel measures worth by what we produce, consume, and possess. People without money, jobs, health, home, education, or status do not count for much. Paul warns that a false gospel is a curse. To measure life solely this way smothers us in emptiness.

The Samaritan was an outsider. He was familiar with insults: people moving away to avoid contact. No surprise that a person at home on the margins would notice a stranger sprawled in a ditch. Privilege had not compromised his vision. He could see. He could hear. He was moved to act.

Transformation often begins with those whose flesh touches our own. No wonder that the poor often open their doors to those in trouble. Up close, suffering and injustice become real. As our moral imagination grows, the situation of those at a distance become visible. When children fleeing violence show up at our border, we must find ways to help. God says: you will find me in the poor. That road will lead us home.

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