



July 18, 2010 Sermon by Kimiko Karpoff

The Good Samaritan

Readings: Luke 10:25-37

This story that we call the Good Samaritan is a road story, a travel story. Jesus and his friends are on a journey to Jerusalem. The closer they get to Jerusalem, the more vulnerable Jesus becomes. Jesus knows this and yet chooses to keep going.

The Traveler of the story is also on the road. He's going the other direction, away from Jerusalem. By misfortune, not choice, he is made vulnerable.

It would have been so easy for Jesus to turn around, to keep his head down. Yet, odd as it seems to us knowing the outcome, the choice he makes is the life-giving choice. He chooses to carry forward the Kingdom of God. He chooses to "Be the change he wants to see in the world."¹

The traveler did not choose his circumstance, yet it probably shifted his world view. Before that event he, like most everyone in his culture, would have looked upon Samaritans with disdain. *Now* we associate Samaritans with people who help. In fact in a news story a few days ago, the reporters kept referring to the Samaritan who had stopped to help a young woman who was attacked. In Jesus' day, though, Samaritans were the "Those People," the folks who make you wrinkle your nose and spit at the thought of them.

If the traveler had been conscious when that man approached, he would quite likely have declined the Samaritan's help with the most powerful language he could think of.

Instead he wakes up in an inn with his wounds tended, forced to look the Samaritan in the face and see a neighbour.

The story of the Good Samaritan is a good example of a parable. By definition, a parable is unsettling and world shattering. One of my professors described a parable as "dressing up to go skiing only to find yourself on the beach playing with a beach ball."²

In modern Christian tradition we have focussed on the helping aspect of this story. We put ourselves in the role of the Samaritan and conclude that we should help those in distress. The bigger challenge, the one that makes this a parable rather than an exemplary story, is to be in the role of the traveller. The bigger challenge is to accept our vulnerability and be open to the life it can bring, to see neighbour in those who make us uncomfortable and to be open to receiving. It's how we invite the Christ and bring the Kingdom of God.

May it be so.

1 Mahatma Gandhi

2 Harry Maier, NT500 class, November 12, 2009.