

**Sermon July 13, 2025**

**Prayer of Brokenness**

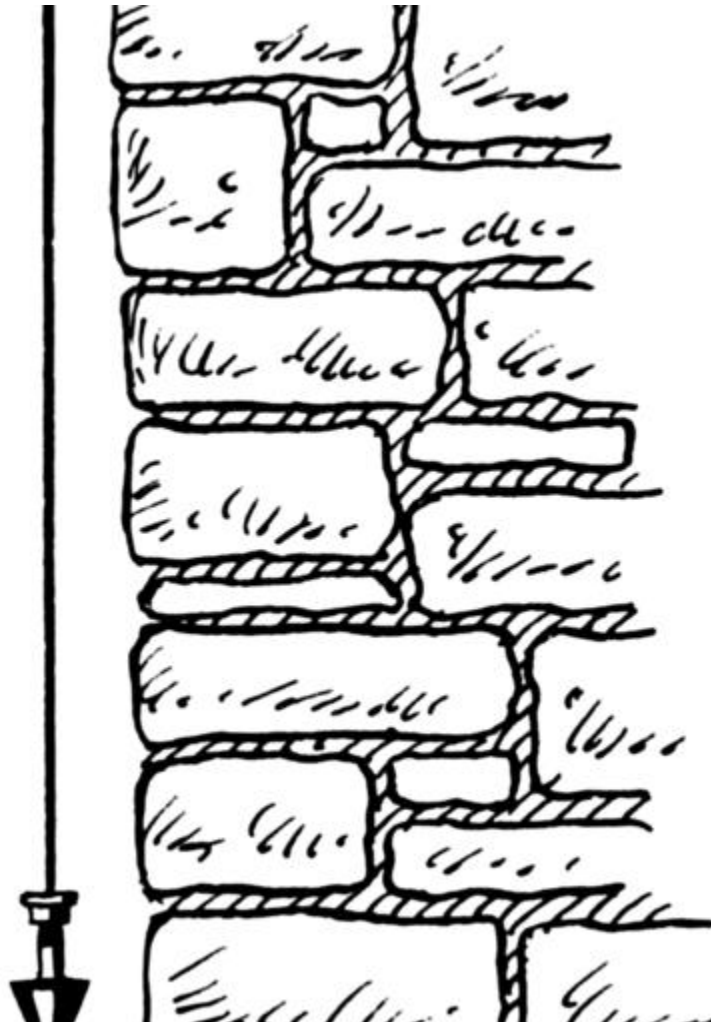
During this moment of silence, let us think of those people who you would struggle to welcome and affirm, if they joined us for worship. What makes it difficult for you? Write it down on the strip of paper and lift them up in prayer.

**Words of Blessing**

Rip it up

One: There is no pain that God cannot heal. There is no wrong that God cannot forgive. Come, immerse yourselves in the healing waters of God's forgiveness. Come and be restored. Let God make you whole.

**Many: Thanks be to God! Amen.**



A plumbline

It's used to see if something is straight.

People use them when building walls and houses to make sure what they are building is going to be straight and strong. They are also used to see if a building or structure has moved, and if not, then by how much. Because if a wall is not straight, what might happen to it?

It might fall down.

Our Hebrew Scripture reading for today says that God uses a plumbline. God says to a special man called Amos

'I'm setting a plumbline in the midst of my people, I will never again pass them by. I will never let their crooked ways pass inspection anymore'.

God's people were called Israel and they had a special agreement with God that they would keep God's laws and rules.

But God people didn't keep these, and that made God really tired and upset. They didn't keep their end of the agreement and they took advantage of God's goodness, they were fighting with each other and with other people. And it needed to stop.

So God said to Amos, I'm going to measure all my people to see how straight and strong and true they are, or how crooked and bad they have become. Only those who have kept my laws will be my people.

What are the rules that God needs us to live by?

To live a straight and upright life means making choices. We make choices everyday to do things or to not do things. To be good or to be bad. To live lives of love

### **Luke 10:25-37**

*Today's Gospel is one we all know. But as a New Testament Professor used to tell his students: "don't confuse familiarity with understanding."*

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.\* 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all

your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.'

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'

Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii,\* gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?'

He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

## Being Neighborly

When I was in Divinity School, my New Testament Professor had a very strong French accent. When we reached the day to discuss this passage, he retold it. He told us of the traveler who was attacked: "They kicked him and bit him!"

"What!" my friend and I looked at each other. I don't remember anyone being bitten in the Bible. We scrambled to find the passage and looked for ourselves only to break out in laughter as we realized that they "beat" him.

Sometimes a story is so familiar to us, we think we know it... truly know it. And when it is told again, we don't listen. We don't hear what Jesus is trying to tell us.

Don't confuse familiarity with understanding. In fact, sometimes we are so familiar with a text that it makes it harder to understand what it means.

Today we are faced with an important question: Who is our neighbor... and who is being left on the side of the road?

This is a congregation that loves to serve. Look around, and you will see the ones that you can count on if you are hurting. Look around and you will see the ones who will be the ones who come when I say someone needs help. I imagine that as you heard this story again, many of us put ourselves in the role of the traveler who stopped and helped.

Maybe you even shook your head and tsked, tsked as you heard about those prominent religious leaders who passed on by. "And they call themselves people of God?" We are not told why they leave the man there. Being a good religious person doesn't mean you have the right answers or always do the right thing.

If we are really honest, how many of us have driven by someone in need, especially on a dark lonely road? How many of us lock our car doors as we drive through certain neighborhoods? We do it because we are alone... elderly... a woman..., perhaps for some of the same reasons as those ancient travelers? Maybe we are less like the third traveler than we like to think and more like the first two.

It's easier to help those we know and who are familiar.

Whatever the reason... we know that these two men kept on going, leaving behind someone who was in pain and possibly dying. Someone who desperately needed a helping hand.

Along comes a third man. Jews and Samaritans hated each other... for religious and political reasons that stretched back for centuries. For first century Jews, Samaritans were the worst of the worst... eternal enemies! Yet a Samaritan was the one who reaches out and helps the wounded man.

Picture who you wrote on the paper. The one who stops is our mortal enemy... one we assume means us harm.

The enemy who is really a neighbor is the one who stops... he is the one who feels compassion. The enemy who is really a neighbor treats the man's wounds and finds him a safe place to stay. And then he takes it a step further... he pays for it out of his own pocket. He gives the innkeeper two days pay to care for the man.

The enemy... the worst of the worst... not only stops, but he offers overwhelming generosity.

When Jesus asks us "Who is the true neighbor?" he is pointing beyond ethnic and cultural barriers. But maybe he is pointing us to something more.

What if today Jesus needs us to identify with the traveler who was kicked, beaten, maybe even bitten by cruel and unnamed thugs... left to die alone on the side of the road?

What if we are being called to learn what it means not to serve... but to be served... to be cared for... to accept the extravagant love and welcome?

And that's not easy. When you are a church filled with servers, its hard to be the one who is served.

Years ago, Ken and I celebrated when I learned I was pregnant. Becoming a mother was a dream come true. I was in the 2nd trimester, and had just started to tell extended family and friends. I went to my regularly scheduled Dr.'s appointment. She was unable to find a heartbeat... she tried over and over again... nothing. Of course, my heart was broken.

The next day, I had a D&C. As I woke up from the anesthesia, the tears streamed down my face. When I went home to recover, I felt broken and couldn't stop crying. My parents drove from Boston with flowers, Chinese food and love. My husband held me. And somewhere in the depths of my pain, I realized, for the first time in my adult life, I was the one being cared for instead of being the caretaker. And I didn't like it. I felt helpless. I felt vulnerable. I felt alone.

It's easy to serve. It's easy to give yourself to others. It's much harder to be vulnerable and allow others to serve you... especially when those who pick you up and care for you and offer you extravagant love are those we do not already know or those we do not understand.

We are called to embrace our brokenness and our vulnerability and to see who stops to see if they can help... who brings us what we need to grow and become stronger. It probably will not be the ones we expect to stop and pick us up... but it will be the ones who will be the most equipped to help us in our need.

We are invited to be a community that is bound together by our shared need and our common vulnerability. God works through so many people to care for us, and they are often the most unexpected people in the most unexpected places. It is in these moments of new awareness that you may look into the eyes of a stranger and see the Christ light shining through.

God wants to meet our needs through one another and once we are healed and a little stronger, God sends us out once again to look around and care for those who are wounded too.

Amen

## Blessing in a Time of Violence

— Jan Richardson

Which is to say this blessing is always.

Which is to say there is no place this blessing does not long to cry out in lament, to weep its words in sorrow, to scream its lines in sacred rage.

Which is to say there is no day this blessing ceases to whisper into the ear of the dying, the despairing, the terrified.

Which is to say there is no moment this blessing refuses to sing itself into the heart of the hated and the hateful, the victim and the victimizer, with every last ounce of hope it has.

Which is to say there is none that can stop it, none that can halt its course, none that will still its cadence, none that will delay its rising, none that can keep it from springing forth from the mouths of us who hope, from the hands of us who act, from the hearts of us who love, from the feet of us who will not cease our stubborn, aching  
...marching, marching

until this blessing has spoken its final word,  
until this blessing has breathed its benediction  
in every place,  
in every tongue:

*Peace.*

*Peace.*

*Peace.*