

Trinity 13

In about the 740th year before Christ, Tiglath- Pileser of Assyria conquered the 10 Northern tribes of Israel who had been divided from the south since Solomon. In return for an annual silver tribute, Assyria let them keep their independence. Israel agreed and the Assyrian army went home. But then Israel reneged. After years of rebellion under Pekahiah, Pekah and Hoshea, Assyria finally had it. In about the year 722BC, the Assyrian empire (north and east of Israel) defeated her cities, killed many people and then, applied Assyrian policy: They carted off many thousands of the Israelites to various parts of the Assyrian empire (these became the legendary lost tribes). Then, Assyria moved thousands of replacement citizens from various parts of their empire into the land of Israel. These people intermarried with Israelites still living there and became Samaritans. *A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.* Today, consider the parable of the Good Samaritan from the point of view of the man who was set upon by thieves. For the hapless traveler, the sight and sound of the approaching Samaritan was a most blessed sight no matter what history they might have. When you're in that kind of trouble and hurt any help is welcomed. Robbed of your possessions, stripped of your dignity, drained of life and unable to help yourself, you would consider even the approach of your bitterest enemy to be a blessed sight—for that's what the Samaritan was to the Jew. On the other hand, when you are in that condition, even your most admired hero would lose all of his luster by passing on without helping. Thus, your condition, has a great bearing on how you see those coming to you. When someone appears to you as a bitter enemy, see how quickly your attitude changes when they extend a hand to help you. And when someone seems a great friend, it is hollow when they leave you alone. This is why, in this parable, Jesus gives Himself the role of the Samaritan. For natural man is at enmity with God. You want nothing to do with Him. You see God coming down the road and think, "All He ever does is demand things of me—saying, 'thou shalt something-or-another,' and He will hurt me." So, you hide in the bushes when you hear God coming. (Genesis 3:8) But, on the other hand, when you see a self-help guru or some strict preacher spewing new and more stringent laws, you can't wait to hear more. For you think that these are truly your friends who will do you every good. But today, Jesus exposes each for what he is—all show and no go. Purporting to be your salvation, they instead leave you high and dry. And God, the One who you think is your deadly enemy, comes only to help you. That is the truth of the matter. And you would think that once you became a Christian you would no longer think of God as an enemy. But you still do. Every single time that you hear God's command and want to do something else. It is that old attitude raising its head that believes God's commands to be harmful.

This is especially true when those commands involve other people. Whether it is to obey them as authorities or to help their bodily needs... Whether to love and honor your spouse or spend your money as God's money... These are often seen as unreasonable commands that will only hurt me. It is as though they were issued by an enemy-God who wants only to harm you. But on the other hand, when some "wise" person comes down the road and provides you with a pious-sounding rationale for not obeying God's commands, you think that you have finally found a real friend. But Jesus, today, reminds you what we have learned time and again at His feet. Namely, things are not as they appear. The soft words of those who counsel you to despise God and His Word have proven time and again to do you the greatest harm. Where you have listened to them against God's word, not only have you treated God as an enemy but you have done yourself great harm. Look upon your past and you will know that I speak the truth. As a result of these past sins, you are not only at enmity with God but you are also beaten up, miserable, left for dead in the ditch. Now, today, Jesus the Good Samaritan is coming down the road to you. The Enemy of natural man appears to be yet another menace who will do you more harm. But do not believe that. For this Samaritan comes only to do you good. And He is the only one who can. No one else will or can—in spite of soft words and wise-sounding counsel. But today, the Samaritan finds you left for dead with gaping wounds and He takes you to Himself; puts you on His own donkey and your wounds become His. On the cross He bore your stripes and carried your sorrows. The pain that you brought upon yourself by sin. Has now become Jesus' own pain and suffering and death. He bears it in His own body on the cross. As a result of His suffering for you and in your stead, Jesus now comes to you with healing and balm for your battered soul. You are unable to walk so He carries you and it counts the same as if you walked. Unable to speak, so He speaks for you. Unable to lift a finger so He lifts you. All of Jesus' good deeds are counted as your good deeds. His righteousness is yours. But He is not done being the Good Samaritan. The Man of mixed race (God/Man) still comes to you today in His Church--the Inn of the parable. There He has left two valuable coins for your care. This is the oil that He pours onto your wounds through the preaching of the Gospel. The wine that He gives you, He pours out at this altar and into this cup. For it is His own blood poured into you for the forgiveness of your sins. Through this preaching and this voice and declares to you that your sins are forgiven for His sake and that you who were dead now live. Here He pledges to keep you and care for you until He returns for you. Even though He is ascended into Heaven so that His visible presence is removed from your sight, nevertheless He has left His Word and Sacraments so that you may be certain that the care you receive here is His own care. He has not and will not abandon you but continues to care for you until you are totally recovered. That is, until you are brought to eternal perfection in heaven. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.