

ORDINARY TIME – 5th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

RECOLLECTING OURSELVES FOR WORSHIP

Music (please use this time for quiet and reflection)

Gong [followed by silence]

Call to Worship

Hymn – 263 [Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise]

Opening Prayer

OUR HUMANNESS AND GOD’S GRACE

Call to Confession

Unison Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, you are in the “quality of life” business. I am in the “enjoyment of life” business. These are not necessarily opposites; however, they do often conflict in that the pursuit of quality frequently takes me into internal and external places that though they are alive are not always all that much fun. You invite me to be connected to the life I actually have, especially the elements of me that are always seeking my attention and which I habitually ignore. Again, not something that is always enjoyable; however, the connection does bring a deep-seated satisfaction which satiates a longing in me to know who I am and to participate in my life, both the grandeur and the pathos of it. Over time, I have learned to distrust your invitations to explore and know the depths of my own life; I am cautious about considering those insights and musings that introduce me to or remind me of the truth that there is more to me than the routines with which I fill my time and attention. I count on you to tickle me into consciousness of the life that is mine. Enable me to enjoy the quality that is in my life, so that I might find satisfaction in being the person I am.

Personal Prayer of Confession in Silence

Assurance of Pardon

LISTENING FOR THE WORD OF GOD

Story for the Children

Scripture – Luke 10:25-37

Prompting

Silence and Reflection

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Hymn – Insert [Make Me a Captive, Lord]

Announcements

Minute for Mission

Our Gifts and Offerings

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Christ all creatures here below;

Praise Holy Spirit, Comforter;

One God, Triune, whom we adore. Amen.

The Prayers of the People and Lord’s Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us in the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and forever. Amen.

GOING OUT – to serve, to journey, to live the word

Hymn – 213 [God, Our Lord, a King Remaining]

Charge and Benediction

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

TODAY        10:00    Worship and Church School  
                 11:00    Coffee and Fellowship

Lectionary Readings from Cycle C for July 21, 2019  
Amos 8:1-12; Psalm 52; Colossians 1:15-28; Luke 10:38-42.

F.Y.I.

Next Sunday we will share lunch. Plan to stay and bring some food to share.

Jim is on vacation beginning tomorrow, July 15<sup>th</sup>, and will return to work on August 26<sup>th</sup>. During that time the church office will be closed. Please contact one of our Elders or Deacons if you need assistance.

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Our web site is <[www.faithpresbyterianrp.org](http://www.faithpresbyterianrp.org)>

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## Ordinary Time, 5th Sunday after Pentecost (Luke 10:25-37)

“Eternal life” is the English translation of Greek words meaning “perpetual” and “vitality.” There are two issues we need to work through if we are to understand what eternal life is.

First, the English translation encourages us to think of eternal life as something that comes to us when our physical life ends and means we will live forever. This is a gross misunderstanding of what the concept is intended to convey. Eternal life refers to a quality of life that God offers us while we are alive, a life characterized by vitality that “never ends or changes” [the meaning of perpetual].

A second issue is that vitality is generally understood as something like exuberance, being full of energy as in excitement and cheerfulness. This also is a misunderstanding. Vitality is the byproduct of our being connected to and engaged with the life we are actually living. The connection is one characterized by energy; however, the energy can be experienced as any feeling/emotion that happens to be true of us. The feeling/emotion associated with this energy may and will change as life changes and our feeling states emerge and recede, but the state of having the energy created by the connection does not end or change.

Eternal life is a state of living where we are related to ourselves consciously, that is with awareness, and, we could add, deliberately or intentionally, as long as we allow for periods of time when we intentionally allow ourselves to rest and be insentient.

The parable of the good Samaritan illustrates how this vitality that never ends or changes could manifest in us. It illustrates how being connected to our actual life might look with regard to a particular issue, particularly how broad, complicated or conflicted that connection might sometimes be. It is not telling us how to act in every situation, but how being connected to our actual life might look with regard to any situation. The issue for us is to figure out how to be related to our own lives in the same way as the parable demonstrates, in any situation, internal or external, which we encounter.

[Jim Robie, 7-12-19]

### Ordinary Time, 5th Sunday after Pentecost (Luke 10:25-37)

It would be helpful if this text did not have the title “The Parable of the Good Samaritan,” and instead had the title “How to Have Eternal Life [How to Live a Life Characterized by Perpetual Vitality].” The parable of the Good Samaritan is often read as a stand-alone story and not connected to the dialog between Jesus and a lawyer which precedes it. When we approach the parable as a stand-alone story, it is easy to moralize on the parable and understand its focus to be having compassion and being helpful. Today’s lectionary reading links the two, as it should, because the parable of the Good Samaritan elaborates the answer to the question the lawyer asked of Jesus: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Expanding the meaning of the Greek words, the question becomes: “How can I participate in a steady and continuous frame of mind characterized by vitality, by the capacity to live, grow and develop?” It is possible to hear the question as being concerned with how to have something after we stop breathing. Doing so would be off target. The lawyer asks the question to get an answer to an issue that is real to him in the here and now: how to have a vital life while breathing. He answers his own question by saying “...love God, with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus responds by saying the lawyer has answered “in a straight manner, i.e. correctly.” If we think of God as the creator of insight, as that which initiates and orchestrates the emergence and development of consciousness, awareness and perception, and then look at the Greek words in this answer, we could elaborate the answer as follows: with as much force as we have, and using our ability to think and feel, using our capacity to experience sensations and have sense perceptions, and using our intellect’s capacity for deep thought—be receptive to insights, to the expansion and increase of our consciousness, awareness and perception which God is constantly offering us. Making this effort will give us more vitality than we can imagine.

The parable of the Good Samaritan amplifies this answer, and it is important to keep the parable connected to the question and its answer. If separated from both, the parable tells us to have

compassion for others, and to act compassionately toward them. Living in this way is a good thing. However, living in this way will not necessarily bring us the kind of life the lawyer is seeking. Simply being compassionate will not actually address the absence of vitality, and depending on how we arrive at acting compassionately, it will distract us from that absence. If our need is to directly address that absence, then a different orientation is needed.

The lawyer’s question is: “How can I participate in a steady and continuous frame of mind characterized by vitality, by the capacity to live, grow and develop?” To answer this, we need to internalize the parable and let the people in the parable represent parts of us: there is a part of us that is wounded; another part that wounds; another part that responds to being wounded; another part that cannot respond and passes by. The parable, then, is an invitation to be receptive and open to the insights God will bring us about our own life as we pay attention to these parts of us and what they have to say in any situation we face. We are asked to be sympathetic to each and all of these parts of us, to feel for them and their needs, to pay attention to their advice as they discuss around our internal table the question of how to respond to a situation we have encountered. Participating in the dynamics of this conversation is how we “participate in a steady and continuous frame of mind characterized by vitality, by the capacity to live, grow and develop.” Seeing the parable in this way allows us to utilize it as an example of how to **approach** a situation rather than how to **act** in a situation. Each part will have issues evoked by whatever situation we are encountering. What we are asked to do is take seriously the different points of view around our internal table and attend to them in a compassionate way. Doing so allows us to respond compassionately to everyone involved in a situation, where the “everyone” includes the components of our personality that are inside us and the people who are outside us. Rather than get caught in arguments between opposing needs or impulses, like the impulse to respond or the impulse to ignore, we would allow the different parts of us to speak at our internal table, learn from them, and work out a way to act that meets the most needs, realizing that it is likely not all needs will be met optimally.

Let's say we encounter a situation where an objective person needs some kind of help. To love God would be to welcome what the different parts of us have to say about the matter. One part of us may identify with the one in need and want to respond; another part of us may not want to respond at all because it feels put out and victimized by the inconvenience of doing so due to its own burdens and the added burden of interrupting our life to offer aid; another part of us may realize we do not have the resources or capacity to respond as needed, and therefore cannot respond or can only make a limited response; another part of us might think this is an important opportunity for whoever is needy to learn to take better care and learn responsibility for getting out of the situation they are in. If we want to be alive, we need to be connected to this internal conversation so that we are participating in what is actually going on in us regarding what we are facing. We need to compassionately attend to this conversation. As we do so, and given whatever the information is which we receive, we may choose one thing or another. Most likely our choice will be some combination of what we are hearing. The Samaritan does just this: he personally offers aid, but he also pays someone to help him make the response he chose because he had other things he needed to do. Whichever we choose is not as important as the fact that a consideration was made before a conscious choice was made. Whichever we choose will bring us life by allowing us to be present to ourselves, as we are, in the situation we are facing. Whatever we choose, the choice will be one that does justice to the participants involved: we treat the different parts of us and the person we are relating to in an "equitable and fair manner" [the meaning of justice]. Jesus is inviting us not so much to act in a particular way; he is inviting us to participate in our life in a certain way, in every action we take, in every situation we face.

The same way of being related would apply if we are facing something that is entirely subjective. If we are struggling with a feeling and whether or not to act on it, we will find there are different parts of us that have their own needs and desires about this issue. One part of us will want to have the feeling and explore it; another will want to act on it and not explore it; another will

want to ignore the whole issue and pass over it. To love God would be to be sympathetic and receptive toward each of the components of our life, and to listen to the internal conversation about which course of action to take. If the course of action that is chosen is off target in some way, the issue will be presented again, and the conversation will continue. The conversation and the choosing will bring the vitality we are seeking, and by relating to ourselves in this way, justice is done to the different components of our life.

"How can we participate in a steady and continuous frame of mind characterized by vitality, by the capacity to live, grow and develop?" With as much force as we have, and using our ability to think and feel, using our capacity to experience sensations and have sense perceptions, and using our intellect's capacity for deep thought—be receptive to insights, to the expansion and increase of our consciousness, awareness and perception which God is constantly offering us. We pay attention to the different parts of us in any situation we encounter, seeking to honor, welcome and embrace these parts of us in the way we act; and encourage in other people the same way of being related.

[Jim Robie, 7-12-15, 5th after Pentecost, Cycle C, Luke 10:25-37]