



“Dig Deep”

Third Sunday after Pentecost
Saturday and Sunday, June 29–30, 2019

All Services

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Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Galatians 5:1, 13-25; Luke 9:51-62

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

In our gospel reading, Jesus and his gang are probably traveling southbound, heading toward Jerusalem. They attempt to enter a village populated by Samaritans, but they're turned away, and a couple of the disciples want to rain down fire & brimstone on the Samaritans, which seems rather than like over-kill to our twenty-first century North Americans ears. To help this make sense, we need to understand who the Samaritans are in a first century, Palestine point of view. With apologies to anyone who might have any of these traits, but we have to remember that Samaritans are seen as the red-headed, left-handed, stepchild the Israelites.

Centuries prior, when the Children of Abraham came together and were united as *one*, kings ruled them. When King Solomon died, the kingdom divided in two, with Judah being the southern, geographically smaller kingdom in the south, populated by only two of the twelve tribes. The northern, geographically larger, nation, is called Israel, and it has most of the rest of tribes. It was the geographically and tribally smaller nation of **Judah**, however, that had *Jerusalem*, and therefore the Temple of YHWH, which they saw as the **True** House of Gd. The kingdom of **Israel** had to build a *new* temple to worship the Lord God Almighty, in some place other than Jerusalem.

The northern kingdom Israel was eventually overrun, first by the Assyrians, then the Babylonians, followed by the Persians and Greeks. Those tribes pretty much ceased to exist. By the first century AD, the northern kingdom is known more by the *non-Jewish* name their country became to be known as: Samaria.

Pretty much *all* the inhabitants of the former southern kingdom (which by the first century AD is now called Israel) looked down their noses at their cousins in the north: those northerners *didn't* worship in the correct temple, and therefore could not give the proper sacrifices; they had the **gall** to inter-marry with non-Jewish people; and they probably had cooties, too. Overly pious Jewish believers would literally *cross* to the other side of a road if they saw someone they identified as a Samaritan walking on the same street. Samaritans held somewhat similar views toward Israelis, just probably not as severe.

Hopefully, that quick summary explains the disciples' response to their rejection from that Samaritan village: "*Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?*" (Luke 9:54) The disciples were basing their response on years, decades,

centuries, even, of built up animosity, hostility, and pride. They didn't have to dig very deep to come up with their loathing of Samaritans.

So, who are the Samaritans in your life? We all have them, you know. Samaritans, that is. We don't *call* them that, but all of us have people - either individuals, groups, or types - with whom we **do not** get along. Maybe they have a different point of view than we do. Maybe their first language was something other our first language. Maybe it's skin pigmentation, or body type, or gender; maybe they belong to a different political party, or their view on gun rights, or what kind of music they like. Maybe it's their theological persuasion. It could be just about *anything*.

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, lists a whole bunch of things that mess us up:

enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. (Gal 5:20-21a)

*Sometimes, **we** cross over to the other side of the street to avoid our Samaritans. Sometimes, **our** Samaritans bug us so badly we wish we could*

“. . . command fire to come down from heaven and consume them . . .”

And if you try to tell me you don't have Samaritans in your life, then ***I*** will tell ***you*** that you are *lying* to someone: either to **me**, or to **yourself**. Because if you are a Living, Breathing Human being, there is *at least* one person in this world with whom you don't get along. And you probably don't have to dig very deep within yourself to figure out who it is. Because that's part of what it is to be human. we don't always get along.

Being human *can* brings us together. Being human *can also* drives us apart. Our human-ness lies close to the surface. Which is good, usually. It's our human-ness that drives us to have compassion for those in need. It's our human-ness that helps us to have varying types of love of neighbor, co-worker, family, and, hopefully, that someone special. It's also our human-ness that gives us that love of pasta, or Tex-Mex, or good old PA comfort food.

It's our human-ness that also gives us enjoyment of golf, or basketball, or football, or field hockey. Our human-ness helps us decide what clothes to put on in the morning; what color we want to paint the living room; whether we want a pet in our life, and if so, what kind: cat, dog, rabbit, llama.

But our human-ness *also* tends to divide us. Our human-ness drives us apart. Maybe because I don't approve of your hair style, or lack thereof. Maybe because your accent is difficult to understand. Maybe because you live "over there," and I live "over here." Maybe it's just because you are **different** from me.

Each of us have our own Samaritans.

You know what's deeper than our human-ness, though? Faith. Faith in Gd. Faith in self. Faith in others. Faith can bring us together, regardless of all the human parts that would divide us. We learn faith, hopefully, from an early age. and even though our human-ness is baked into our being, from the womb outward, faith **can** over-ride our human-ness, **if** we let it. Our faith is buried deep within us, In a good way. Still, we need to dig deep to get that faith out.

Remember what Paul said to the Galatians?

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another (Gal 5:13-15)

I rather like that. I think we can paraphrase Paul into:

Don't devour one another.

Thing is, to **not** devour one another, to **not** command fire to come down from heaven and consume those with whom we do not agree, that go against our human-ness. Because we kind of *want* to do hurt those whom we perceive have hurt us.

We have to dig deep, down into ourselves, into our faith, in order to find God in us. And *when* we find God buried deep in ourselves, that's also where we find the *other* list Paul talked about:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness . . . (Gal 5:22-23a)

We have to reach out beyond our self-centered reactions when we encounter our own Samaritans, we have to dig down, deep, and respond to our Samaritans in faith, no matter what it is that they are doing. We have to dig deep into our faith to remember that

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

Brothers and sisters, I encourage you, dig deep into your faith, and let the Spirit be your guide.

Amen

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