

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

Sermon Title: "Won't You Be My Neighbor?"

Rev. Josh Fitterling

"Won't you be my neighbor?" For those of you who grew up with Mr. Roger's Neighborhood, which aired from 1968 until 2001, you likely know where the inspiration for the sermon title today came from. You can likely picture his trademark-like sneakers and his sweaters as he would sing the words "would you be mine, could you be mine, won't you be my neighbor?" In fact, to this day, whenever I where a sweater that kips up all the way in the front, and I put it on, I can't help but sing a little in my head, it really was quite catchy! Oh how I loved that show! In fact, my college roommates and I would, from time to time, reference Mr. Rogers as a great teacher of our childhood and still an inspiration in our college years. He really offered so much wisdom to the world, including a statement of his that I have constantly been drawn to, particularly when our world faces challenging times. He said, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.' To this day, especially in times of disaster, I remember my mother's words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers - so many carrying people in the world." (*The World According to Mister Rogers*).

This past Monday, as morning dawned on the aftermath of the storm, with power out and trees down, helpers emerged from the darkness of the night to begin caring for one another. Neighbors were helping neighbors cut up down trees, checking in on one another. As I walked around town on Monday, I was simply blown away by the number of offers of help that were extended - with so many sincere blanket offers of, if you hear of anyone in need, let me know how I can help. And it was my goal to spread the word that if there was a need that anyone had or that anyone heard about, that they could reach out to the church. And I knew, that if a call came in or a need arose, that we were ready. That there were people standing by to offer help, with gifts of time, talent, and treasure ready to be given to the care of neighbor - ready to be a helper.

Today, with this most recent experience of that storm and as we as a church begin our Stewardship Campaign for 2018, I see the parable of the Good Samaritan, which Libby offered in her reading, to be a perfect scripture for us to reflect upon today as we think about the gifts that we can offer, that we do offer. In this parable we witness giving in the most holistic sense possible. I am a big believer in the 3 T's when it comes to giving, and you have heard me talk about them before – being open with our time, with the talents that we have been given, and with the treasure that we hold, and in this parable, we see all three of these come to life in a beautiful way that show a love for God and a love for neighbor. The Good Samaritan first gave his time. We do not know where this Samaritan was journeying to or for what, but that didn't matter – for when he was moved to give, as he took pity on the man in need, he carved out the time to care which is more than the Priest and the Levite did as they simply passed by on the other side of the road, continuing on their journey, not even giving so much as a minute of time to that man. The Good Samaritan gave his time. And then, the Good Samaritan used his talents, the things that he was able to do, such as using his knowledge of caring for wounds and his physical strength to hoist this man upon his animal to take him to an inn. And finally, the Good Samaritan used his treasure to pay for and provide a place for this man to heal, with the promise to the innkeeper to pay more if needed.

Beloved in Christ, we are all called to be a neighbor and when we commit ourselves to the beloved community found within this church, we live this call together. And I am so thankful to be living this call with all of you. For the blessing of being neighbor together is that we don't have to do it all on our own. For as we offer our best gifts to this work that we as a church in the heart of Wiscasset are called to do, we become a powerful force for loving God and loving neighbor. As individuals, we may not always have the time, but as a community, there are always those who do. As individuals, we may not always have the talent, the ability to care for our neighbors in the ways that they need, but as a community, there are always those who do have the necessary talent. As

individuals, we may not always be able to give much in the form of treasure to sustain the ministry and the care that we strive to offer, but as a community, there are always those who can. And through these offerings, as we live out the call to be a neighbor, we will always be able to give love, care, and compassion to all who are in need.

As we hold this parable of the Good Samaritan today, the question to ponder is simple – what is our best gift of time, talent, and treasure that we can offer to our shared work of being a force in our community for loving God and loving neighbor? And we trust that, together, our best gifts will meet the needs of this church to be a spiritual home for all who seek God and to be a neighbor to all in this community and beyond. That whenever someone approaches us, saying, “would you be mine, could you be mine, won’t you be my neighbor?”, my prayer is that, through all the ways that we support our shared work together, the answer is always “yes”. Our gifts joined together, make that “yes” possible. Let’s make that “yes” possible. Amen.