

Sermon 2010 Pentecost 7
Text: Luke 10:25-37
Theme: "Rescue Me!"
7-11-10

In our prayer of the day, we proclaim that Christ rescues us from the perils of this life and that is true. He does often rescue us. That is probably the area of most consistent communication with God. Oh God help me with this. Oh God save me from that. Even the most heathen among us will call on God when things seem hopeless – hence the old saying that there are no atheists in foxholes. For those who may not what a foxhole is; a foxhole is a defensive fighting position in which a soldier either digs a pit or builds up a sandbag barrier or both to provide some cover from which to shoot and not be shot. So when the enemy is swarming in and you are all alone in your foxhole – very few people are atheists. All of a sudden the most callous unbelievers begin to pray.

But while Jesus invites us to pray and even encourages us to pray, he is not a lucky rabbit's foot. He is not something to pull out only when we have exhausted every other means. How would you feel if the person you loved never spoke to you unless

he or she needed something from you? Wouldn't you feel used? Wouldn't you feel as though you were only important to that person when there was a particular need? Do you think Jesus might feel the same way about us?

Get sick – go to church and pray. Lose your job – go to church and pray. Bank forecloses – go to church and pray. But is that really the relationship Jesus wants with us? Is he the heavenly fire department that rushes in to save us whenever we have fouled up our lives? It seems to me that Jesus wants a deeper and more meaningful relationship with us than that. That is why he gives us his Law.

We often miss the point of God's Law. The law was not given to kill our fun. Neither do we get heavenly bonus points for keeping it. The Law was given to provide a plan for us – a roadmap – to help us live a more joyful life and have a deeper and richer relationship with God. If you ask me how to get to Milwaukee, I could say head north. But it might be a little more helpful to you if I tell you to take 294 North to 94 and 94 North to Milwaukee. Likewise, God gave us broad parameters for life –

“Love God and love your neighbor” but he also gave us more specific parameters in the 10 Commandments.

The purpose of directions is not to limit us but to free us so that we can get to where we want to go by following the best possible route. God wants us to have joyful productive lives and the 10 Commandments are meant to help us do that in the same way that directions are meant to help us get to where we want to go.

God’s Law is an amazing gift to us. How would we know how much good honor and respect in relationship can do were it not for the 4th Commandment? How would we know how much damage gossip can do were it not for the 8th Commandment? If we use the Law as God intended (not as human beings pervert it), it rescues us from peril and gives us a full and rich life. If we use the Law correctly, that is where our rescue comes and we have far fewer needs to pray “Rescue me Jesus!”

Think about the last time you needed rescuing and ask yourself if at some point paying closer attention to the Law could have averted the situation. It doesn’t work every time. We live

in a broken world and sometimes we need rescuing and Jesus stands ready, but more often than not, we can avoid pain and heartache by following the Law he has already given us.

The problem comes when we pervert the Law. We try to make it into something that elevates us by keeping it and makes us better than others. We try to make it worth points so that we get to heaven when others don't. Many people think of God's Law and the Scout merit badge system as similar things. NO! One is the creator's handbook for a joyful life and the other is a man-made system of rewards for achieving a set of man-made goals. One is imbued with the creator's love and the other is imbued with human goals and values. Whether we are talking about Scouting or sports or any human organization, we have to remember that God's Law is on a much different and far higher level.

Remember that God is based on a whole and complete love. Our sinful and corrupt nature is based in selfishness and legalism for our own purpose. We tend to bend and pervert the Law to serve our own selfish desires. For instance, we like to beat a

sinner over the head with a piece of the Law that he breaks as though the piece that we break does not matter. You can't do that with God's Law. It is all or nothing. If I beat you over the head with the Law, I have to beat myself over the head as well. There is no picking and choosing. The point of the Law is not to point out sinners but to help us find the right path and by the right path I don't mean the path that is morally superior but the path that provides us with more joy.

So when we say that Jesus rescues us, we are correct but not in the sense that he pops into the world and waves his magic wand. That happens about once in a millennium if you use the Bible as a measurement. He has already rescued us. He died on the cross to forgive all our sins and insure our eternity with him. He provides Baptism and the Lord's Supper to strengthen our faith in his promise of eternal life. And he has provided us with the Law to keep us out of the paths of danger and on the path of righteousness. AMEN