

"Know Your Place"

Text: Luke 10:25-37

May God our Father bless you with strength of faith, and joy in the sure, certain fact that his Son, Jesus Christ, has paid the full penalty for your sins. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed, it's certainly not a very "American" slogan, is it – the title of this morning's sermon: "*Know Your Place*"? This country was born and raised on the belief that "*all men are created equal*." As such, we tend to frown on the old European ideas of "place." There's good and bad in that. The good is rather obvious, the bad not so much.

It was obviously good, for example, to drive a stake through the heart of the nonsense that one human being is inherently more valuable than another human being – or "better" in some way – just by virtue of who their parents were. How many civilizations down through the centuries have suffered under terrible rulers just because those rulers happened to be related to previous rulers? How much damage was done in the history of mankind simply because the best and the brightest were denied access or opportunity; were denied even the chance to use their gifts to the fullest just because some caste system had assigned them a "place"?

Getting rid of that nonsense was obviously a good thing. The problem is that, as with so many other things in life, we have now overreacted to the point that we no longer acknowledge that "know your place" *does* have a place – as un-American as that sounds. The fact that we believe that "*all men are created equal*" does not mean that all are entitled to everything they believe they deserve. Nor does it mean that possessions and wealth must be equalized (taken from the one who *earned* it and given to those who just *want* it.) Nor does "*created equal*" mean that everyone has the same gifts and abilities, or that everyone is qualified for, or entitled to, any and every job or position.

As bad as these misapplications of our founding principles are, how much worse when we try to force a misconception of "*all men are created equal*" into things spiritual – especially when it means rejecting the idea that God's children do indeed "*have a place*" and need to recognize and accept that place.

Our text for this morning will help us to get a better handle on recognizing when and where you and I need to *know our place*. That portion of God's Word that will guide and instruct us this morning is found in Luke's Gospel, the 10th Chapter:

^{ESV} **Luke 10:25-37** *And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* ²⁶ *He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"* ²⁷ *And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."* ²⁸ *And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."* ²⁹ ¶ *But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"* ³⁰ *Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead."* ³¹ *Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.* ³² *So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.* ³³ *But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.* ³⁴ *He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.* ³⁵ *And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back."* ³⁶ *Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"* ³⁷ *He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."*

These are God's Words, perfect in every way. May God the Holy Spirit grant you the grace to trust that these are his Words and to hear and learn from them accordingly. To this end we pray, "**Sanctify us by the Truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth.**" Amen.

I really can't say that I know anyone that doesn't like "clever" – clever people, clever ideas or inventions, clever sayings. Who, for example, can't appreciate something like, "*Man who runs in front of car gets tired, but man who runs behind car gets exhausted*"? Or "*Man who wants pretty nurse must be patient*"? Or "*Man who leaps from tall building jumps to conclusion*"? But there is also an evil or diabolical kind of clever that is appealing to no one. Our text actually provides examples of both the good and the bad kind of clever. Did you happen to catch them?

Perhaps not surprisingly, the bad example of "clever" came from a lawyer. Isn't it entertaining, by the way, to read over and over again how Jesus' enemies continued to try to trip him up – always failing miserably? Yet human pride being what it is, no doubt this man believed himself up to the task. He could and would succeed where

others had failed. He didn't have a chance, but his ego must have told him otherwise, so he opens the show with a carefully devised question, **"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"**

You and I could obviously read such a question and put the best construction on it – assuming that the man really was just interested in doing the right thing. Our text, however, precludes that. It makes clear that the man came not to learn but to test – not to gain wisdom but to make Jesus look foolish. The question itself was flawed, of course, since **"what shall I do to inherit?"** is a nonsensical question. An inheritance, by definition, can't be earned. Maybe in the lawyer's mind he thought it possible to flatter and insinuate oneself into an inheritance. Regardless, the question was a trap, and Jesus, recognizing it as such, doesn't approach it from the direction the lawyer had cunningly intended. In fact walking around to the back side of it, Jesus turns the question back onto the lawyer: **"What is written in the law? How do you read it?"** Masterful, as always. There was no way Jesus could be condemned for simply asking a question.

The man actually gave a good, factual answer – to a point. His answer (**"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."**) was actually a good answer but to a much different question. The question he answered was, *"What must I do to earn eternal life?"* Jesus was pointing the man to the law, and the man had in fact answered with God's perfect summary of the law.

Jesus again responds factually and forthrightly, but in a way that no one could challenge: **"You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."** No member of any religious group in Jesus' day could or would have challenged this answer as anything but correct. It is, in fact, sin that separates us from our God and prevents our entrance into heaven. Jesus' answer therefore was, *"Right! If you have no sin, you will earn your way into heaven."*

The lawyer recognized the problem immediately. The problem was that he had sin – loads of sin, buckets of the stuff. No matter how good he looked on the outside, he had a front row seat to the reality of his own sinfulness. He could fool others, maybe, but not himself – and certainly not God.

But here's where the "bad clever" part came in. Rather than allow his own heart to be condemned – as it should rightly have been (and probably was, to a certain extent) – he seeks to establish a legal loophole. Since he knows full well that he has in no way loved every single one of his fellow human beings as he has loved himself, he cleverly tries to change or diminish the commandment. He tries to simplify (dumb-down) the law to a

point where he can claim he has kept it. He therefore follows up with his seedy little: **"And who is my neighbor?"** His thought process must have been something like *"I love my parents, wife, and children. Maybe that's enough. If that's the legal definition of 'neighbor,' maybe I'm good to go."* It's also possible that his fallback plan or goal was to diminish Jesus' popularity by getting him to define "neighbor" as including Israel's enemies.

Again, lest we be tempted to try to put the best construction on his question and imagine that the man was just trying to learn from Jesus, our text makes clear that he wasn't: **"But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus..."**

This is the nasty sort of clever that God hates, the kind that leads to self-justification. It is, nevertheless, the sort of clever that you and I tend to employ on a fairly regular basis – and it is just here that the first example of "know your place" is identified for us. No human being is capable of living a perfect, sin-free life. We are, in the first place, born with the sin we inherited from Adam and Eve. We are born spiritually dead and hostile to our Creator God. We are, therefore, born losers in God's eyes and therefore absolutely powerless to earn our way back into God's good graces by our words or actions. Being kind and loving to our own immediate family members doesn't come close to fulfilling the second half of God's own summary of his holy will: **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** But you and I would like to think so, wouldn't we? We would love to reduce or dilute God's law, here and elsewhere, to the point where we begin to feel good about our general conduct. We would love to believe that the ugly festering cancer of our sin is no big deal. We don't even love our immediate family members like we love ourselves, but all the old Adam is really looking for here is a bit of artificial comfort and peace of mind.

Stop for a moment here to contemplate how often you – consciously or not – employ this same twisted cleverness in your own life. Do you ever justify sin in your life simply because no one knows about it? Do you downplay the severity of sin just because it is not as bad as other sins? Do you feel better about yourself and your sinfulness just because you did something that you consider "good"?

Jesus himself then gives an example of the good kind of clever. He does so first with his answer to the man's second challenge, **"And who is my neighbor?"** Recognize here that you are in the presence of the Grand Master and marvel again at his incomparable wisdom. Jesus could have simply answered, *"Every single one of your fellow human beings is your neighbor."* Surely this would have served to

condemn the man, but Jesus always wants to be more than just a conqueror. He wants more than just to defeat. He wants to win over.

So he answers with a story and another question. The story (we don't know, by the way, if it is a parable or an actual account) is of the Good Samaritan and is probably well known to all of you. Yet I wonder how many really understand Jesus' message here, how many *know your place* in this account? If we miss that, we destroy Jesus' message. The first thing we most often miss here is the fact that Jesus turned the man's question completely around. The man had asked **"And who is my neighbor?"** but Jesus answered with a question that again came at the whole topic from the opposite direction: **"Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"** The question was not *"Whom do I have to love as myself?"* The root problem was that the lawyer saw himself as the strong and healthy doer of good deeds, as the one who could and must provide goodness. The result was that he failed miserably to recognize his place. Jesus saw this man as a wretch that had been incapacitated by sin and Satan and robbed of any hope of eternal life – *unless he received some outside help*. The world trivializes Jesus' message here with their "Good Sam" clubs that picture their members with halos over their heads. They too see themselves as the source of help for others. Nothing wrong with that when it comes to helping stranded motorists, but to adopt that as a salvation plan is a guarantee of an eternity in hell. Jesus wants us to know our place – to see ourselves as *those who need help*.

You and I are the helpless man in Jesus' story. That's our place. Only one thing could save us, and here is where we see Jesus' other bit of cleverness. If man had to rely on himself, man was forever doomed. The "victim" in Jesus' story was incapable of helping himself. The last thing the incapacitated man in the story would have been contemplating was just who he would have to "love" to earn heaven. In his helpless state he was looking for a rescuer or savior. In the same way divine justice demanded perfect obedience from every human being. Every human being who failed – sinning even just once – damned himself. Nor could man offer even one bit of goodness to God to make up for even the smallest of sins. In the face of our helplessness, God designed his divinely clever solution to our desperate problem. He sent his Son (who was not born with original sin) and that Son *did* keep every commandment perfectly – to the very letter of every single law. Jesus then used that perfect life as the payment in full for all of our sins. We could supply no goodness to pay our sin bill – we could not heal ourselves – so God himself provided what was needed in the form of his own dear Son.

By the way, did you recognize the Holy Spirit in this account? He was there. From our text: ***And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'*** That's the Holy Spirit. God supplied the gift of the Holy Spirit to provide for our needs after he left, promising one day to return. In all ways, God provides. We receive. That's our place.

God grant then to each of us the perfect comfort that comes to all who trust that Jesus did what he set out to do. Jesus was born to pay for our sins, and that is exactly what he did. The result? We are forgiven. Now we get to work for God himself. That's our place – working for our God here, and existing forever with him there. What a great place to be, both now and then. Amen.

ESV **Leviticus 18:1-5** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. ³ You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. ⁴ You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. ⁵ You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

ESV **Colossians 1:1-14** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² ¶ To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. ³ ¶ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing--as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. ⁹ ¶ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. ¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

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The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost– July 10, 2022

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 4 (Red Hymnal)
"God Himself Is Present"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Leviticus 18:1-5) God clearly has a right to dictate to us what is right and what is wrong. He alone is the One who determines such things. His opinion is the only one that matters. Our Old Testament lesson is timely in that just as the Jews lived among the Godless, so we too must today live among the Godless. God's warning to the Jews therefore also applies to us: *Do not conform to the evil around you. Be in the world but not of the world.*

Psalm of the Day – Psalm 146 (Supplement page 41)

The Second Lesson: (Colossians 1:1-14) In his Letter to the Colossians, Paul reveals his delight whenever and wherever he finds Christians living their Christian faith. Darkness and light are never compatible. Paul therefore teaches us that whoever is walking "in the light" (according to the new man) cannot also be walking according to the dictates of the old Adam or sinful nature. He also here promotes continual growth through the Word.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15 (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 849 (LSB) (On Screens Only)
"Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness"

The Sermon – Text: Luke 10:25-37 (Printed on the back of this bulletin)
"Know Your Place"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 342 (Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)
"Chief of Sinners Though I Be"

The Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 342 (Stanza 5) (Red Hymnal)
"Chief of Sinners Though I Be"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (50) Average (30)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
	-4:00 p.m.	– Sippert Installation in Bowdle
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – CLC News – Immanuel of Winter Haven has called Pastor Samuel Naumann. Pastor Aaron Ude is considering calls to Redemption of Lynnwood and Ascension of Tacoma. Pastor-elect Zach Sippert is scheduled to be ordained and installed as pastor of Redemption of Bowdle and Zion of Ipswich in a 4pm service in Bowdle this evening. A fellowship meal will follow. All are invited.

Bridal Shower – A bridal shower for Grace Meyer is planned for Sunday, July 17th. Please see the invitation on the bulletin board.

VBS and Church Picnic – This year's Vacation Bible School is scheduled for July 18-22. The annual Church picnic is scheduled for the following Sunday, July 24th.

Man Up! Retreat - The 2022 ManUp! Men's Retreat is scheduled for September 22-25, 2022, at Wyalusing State Park near Prairie du Chien, WI. The retreat is open to men 18 and older and includes Bible study, fellowship, leadership training, team building, relationship building, worship, and many outdoor bonding activities. Register and send in your payment by August 31st for the discounted rate of \$75. Registration increases to \$150 on September 1st. The registration includes lodging and meals. Register here: www.manup.clclutheran.org.

Women's Retreat – The Annual Women's Retreat West is scheduled for September 16-18 at the Chadron State Park in Chadron, NE. Please see the registration sheet on the mailbox table for more information or to register. Registration deadline is August 16th.