

BEING KIND AND PATIENT WITH ONE ANOTHER
The Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37
By Archpriest Peter Olsen
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In the vast wisdom of Mister Rogers*, his underlying theme was about how to be a good neighbor. Please allow me to share some of his edifying thoughts with you:

“From the time you were very little, you've had people who have smiled you into smiling, people who have talked you into talking, sung you into singing, loved you into loving.”

“Listening is where love begins: listening to ourselves and then to our neighbors.”

“Real strength has to do with helping others.”

“In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers.”

“I hope you're proud of yourself for the times you've said 'yes,' when all it meant was extra work for you and was seemingly helpful only to someone else.”

“Mutual caring relationships require kindness and patience, tolerance, optimism, joy in the other's achievements, confidence in oneself, and the ability to give without undue thought of gain.”

“All of us, at some time or other, need help. Whether we're giving or receiving help, each one of us has something valuable to bring to this world. That's one of the things that connects us as neighbors—in our own way, each one of us is a giver and a receiver.”

“Children are to be respected and I respect them deeply. They've taught me an awful lot.”

Children are pure, guileless and innocent. There is much that we can learn from children. Our Savior said, “unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3-4). There is no room for hate in the Christian faith ~ only love, forbearance, patience and forgiveness. We should never judge anyone but ourselves. No one should ever say or do anything mean to another person. God is love. “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

There was a man in today's Gospel who had been beaten by robbers and lay bleeding and in need of help. The Gospel does not tell us the what color his skin was, what his religion or culture was, nor where he came from. It didn't matter. He was simply a fellow human being in need of help. A priest and a Levite walk by and refuse to help him. According to the Torah, they were forbidden to touch or come into contact with anyone who is bleeding. While it is exemplary and praiseworthy to keep our traditions and practices, it is absurd when these practices cause us to refuse to help a fellow human being who is injured and in danger of losing his life. The very purpose of our traditions and rules are to save lives and, above all, to save souls. When these rules work against these purposes, then these rules lose their

significance. Jesus spoke much about this concerning the sabbath laws. Jesus said, “The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27). Jesus did not condemn the Torah and the Law of Moses, but He *did* condemn the abuse of its application: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, **justice** and **mercy** and **faith**” (Matt. 23:23). The 102nd canon of the Council in Trullo states: “It behooves those who have received from God the power to loose and bind, to consider the quality of the sin and the readiness of the sinner for conversion, and to apply medicine suitable for the disease, lest if he is injudicious in each of these respects he should fail in regard to the healing of the sick man.” Our Christian tradition of Canon Law can be just as abused as the ancient Law of Moses of the Old Testament. Our canons and traditions should not be understood as a type of Mosaic Law of the Christians or of the New Testament. They are meant to be a guide to help us with the practical application in daily life of living the Gospel. While it is good and exemplary for us to follow, as far as we are able in a reasonable way, the tenets of the Holy Canons, we must nonetheless avoid the prelest** (plani), the temptation and danger of the pharisaical hypocrisy of claiming to follow the letter of the law and disregard the law’s very purpose and intent. This is exactly what Jesus condemns in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and in so many other places in the New Testament.

The priest and the Levite, by virtue of their positions, should have been the first people to help the injured stranger, yet they ignore him and pass by on the other side of the street. Finally a Samaritan passes by. The Samaritans were considered to be schismatics. When Photini, the woman at the well, asked Jesus if it was alright to worship in the temple of the Samaritans, Jesus tells her that “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). To the shame of the Jewish priest and the Levite, it is the schismatic Samaritan who is the one who finally helps the stranger. He cleans and binds his wounds, places him on his donkey, and takes him to an inn, where he pays the innkeeper to take care of him. The good Samaritan is first of all an icon, an image of Jesus Christ Himself. We are all wounded and in need of spiritual healing, and our Savior binds and cleanses our wounds through the Holy Mysteries of the Church. The inn is the Church, and the innkeeper are the bishops and priests who are the servants of Christ, whose task it is to assist our Savior in taking care of us for our spiritual, physical and emotional healing. All Christians are called upon to imitate our Savior, so the good Samaritan is also an icon of how each of us are called to be. Be kind to one another, be patient, and love each other, and we will be imitating our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Amen.

* Fred Rogers (1928-2003) was the beloved host of the children’s program “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” which ran from 1968-2001. Considered to be the best children’s program of its time (and perhaps all time), he was extremely sensitive to the psychological needs and feelings of children when facing difficult questions and events in their lives.

* *Prelest (plani), spiritual self-deception