

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
August 2, 2015**

**Luke 10:30-37**

**Eight Deadly Sins: APATHY**

- 1. Looking at a priest and Levite**
- 2. Our tendency toward apathy**
- 3. Christ's righteousness**
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**Hymns: 223 – 457 – Distribution: 336, 315 – 323**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

**Luke 10:30-37 –**

*Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.*

*A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.*

*So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.*

*But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.*

*He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.*

*The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'*

*"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"*

*The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

We have had some vivid sins in our sermon series on **"Eight Deadly Sins"** so far this summer! Do you remember some of them? We have looked at sins such as:

- Envy!
- Greed!
- Anger!
- Gossip!
- Lust!

Vivid, burning sins that sinful mankind are regularly swept into; common sins that we have all seen in action!

But today's focus? APATHY? That doesn't seem to be such a big ticket item, perhaps not so exciting? Perhaps there are some of you who don't really care about APATHY. (You're apathetic about the sin?) In fact, if today were a day scheduled for a children's devotion in our service, I wonder what object lesson the pastors would have come up with for "apathy."

Yet, I'd submit to you that the sin of APATHY is one of the more common sins among staunch and professed Christians today. Yes, anger, lust, and greed are certainly traps. But for those who might pride themselves on resisting gross outbreaks of those sins, APATHY can still remain.

Therefore, let's take a look at the sin of APATHY today, and its causes. And let's pray that the Lord would give us the faith and strength to avoid it. Our sermon text for today is Luke 10:30-37. (Read text)

## **1. Looking at a priest and Levite**

When this account is taught, it usually focuses on whom? The Good Samaritan, after whom the account is named. Today let's do something different and focus on two other participants in Jesus' story, a priest and a Levite.

Jesus picked a good route to illustrate his point in this parable. If you would go see the terrain that leads from Jerusalem to Jericho, you would see his point quite well. The road that went down from Jerusalem led through a barren, rocky, dangerous area. Couple that with the fact that travel in their day was quite hazardous because of robbers, bandits, and bad people lurking out there. Such people would

waylay travelers, take their valuables, and do them harm.

The lone man who was traveling in Jesus' story was ambushed by robbers, robbed, and beaten. He was beaten so severely that they left him for dead on the side of the road. Without Life Alert or a cell phone, his chances of finding help and coming through this ordeal were slim.

But help appeared! A priest! Thank goodness a priest – today we would use the term “pastor” – was coming along. He could lend aid to this injured, dying man. But what do we hear? **The pastor, assessing the situation, passed by on the other side of the road.**

But fear not! Another chance for help came by. A Levite! You might remember that the Levites were the temple workers in Israel. Some of them, depending on their descent, were the priests. The rest of them were the temple workers who took care of the maintenance and the operation of the temple. Perhaps we could say that this was a church councilman in that day and age. This sanctified person would certainly help this injured, dying man, wouldn't he? But what does he do? **He passes by on the other side of the road.**

In Jesus' day and age, the third man's chances of helping the injured traveler were slim to none. Along came a Samaritan. You might remember that in Jesus' day Samaria was located right in the middle of Palestine, dividing Judea (south) from Galilee (north). The Samaritans were comprised of the Jewish people left behind at the time of the Old Testament exile who intermarried with the nations around them at that time. They were half-brothers and half-sisters, distant cousins. And they were despised as half-breeds. Jews did not mix with Samaritans. In fact, when traveling from the south to the north and back, Jews would often cross the Jordan and detour around Samaria so they did not have to travel through that territory.

Surely this man would not help. But this was the “good Samaritan” who bandaged his wounds, cared for his needs, transported him to an inn, and paid for his stay. **He was not**

**apathetic, but sympathetic.** The word “apathy” comes from two Greek roots, A- (not) and PATHOS (feeling). In other words, an individual has “no feeling” toward someone or something. The word “sym” in Greek means “with.” Therefore, “sympathy” means that we “feel with” a person, or “feel their pain.”

The question in this parable is “Why?” Why did the pastor and the church councilman fail to lend their help?

- Were they too busy?
- Were they afraid?
- Did they just not want to get involved?

We're not specifically told. **But we know the source of the problem. It's the same place where APATHY springs from today. It was some sort of a “me” problem – my schedule, my feelings, my life, my comfort level, my time.**

## 2. Our tendency toward apathy

Since we all have a sinful nature that has a tendency toward the same attitude, we need to examine ourselves for the sin of APATHY.

The feeling of apathy is alive and well in our country's culture. We see it veiled in phrases we use: “Whatever.” “It works for me.” We also see it in the American Dream: My place, my independence, my property, my stuff, my truck, a feeling of self-sufficiency. Those aren't necessarily sinful things in and of themselves, but definitely an observable culture. As far as others, the American Dream would say that we should tolerate them. Toleration is the goal.

Looking at apathy from a spiritual standpoint, we see that there is a line that we do not want to cross in what is termed a “sin of omission.” James 4 says, “*Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.*” A sin of omission occurs when a believer sees a situation where they could and should be of help, where they could be involved, and they “omit” doing anything. This is a common temptation for Christians today, because by nature we are not programmed to think of others. Our sinful nature is quite selfish and self-centered, and we primarily have our life, our goals, and our comfort in mind. **The root problem comes from the same place that we would see the**

**priest and the Levite's apathy coming from: ME.**

How can this happen? How could you have an apathetic attitude like the priest or Levite? Think about why God has left you in the world after you have come to know your Savior Jesus. *"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."* **In our Christian lives we let our light shine by loving God and our neighbor. We do this in our neighborhoods and our workplace.**

Yet, with the busy-ness and self-centered view that can characterize us, we can become apathetic toward our purpose for living. Our motivation to help that neighbor down the street who has become elderly might be a distant thought in our mind. For the other neighbor who had a break-in or a flooded basement, we might at best give a well-wish and then be on our merry way. For the neighbor lady who has lost her husband, you might be tempted to stay away, rather than knock on her door, ask about her, and offer your sympathy.

**Apathy can also show itself in our church dynamics.** Why has God put us together in a church? Hebrews 10 says, *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."* We are here to encourage each other. We are here to love and befriend each other. We are here to take care of each other. We are here to support one another. We are here to build each other up and be there for each other in our trials and challenges. In fact, I'd submit to you that your church friends and connections are to be some of the closest relationships in your life.

However, temptations toward APATHY can show itself in many ways in a church:

- It's evident when church members are not "meeting together" and "encouraging one another."
- It's evident when church members don't think about getting to know all their brothers and sisters in faith, and stay only in their small circle of acquaintances rather

than getting to know other members they haven't met.

- It's evident when someone takes no interest in any of the fellowship and fun events during the course of a year, a place where they can get to know others in their church family.
- It's evident when someone has no interest in getting to know new people in our congregation.
- It would be evident if you don't look for those in our church who are hurting or struggling, and show your care and concern for them.
- It would be evident if you have little concern for who might be straying from God's flock here. Are you aware of such folks? Do you lose sleep over them? Do you have an inclination to reach out to them as a concerned friend? Or do you not have the time of day for them?

**It also could become a sinful attitude in the mission and work of our congregation.** What is your view of our church and its work? Do you see it as some of the most vital work that's happening in your life, which you are a part of and support? Or is your interest apathetic?

- Do you read our church communications that are sent out, and pray and support them as you can?
- Do you pass up most chances to serve in our ministries? If you saw an opportunity to volunteer where you have the gifts that fit, would you say "No" for no real reason? Would you just assume someone else will do it?
- What is your interest level in our church Voters meetings?
- What is your interest level in our church's outreach? Does the Great Commission our Savior has tasked us with ring continually in your ears? Or have you become rather apathetic about it?

**We could also examine our view of our wider synod and its work:**

- Do you have an interest, along with prayerful and financial support, of our Wisconsin Synod's work?
- Did you know that our synod convention, which occurs every two years, took place this past week?
- Do you read the monthly synod magazine, *Forward in Christ*, that comes in your church mailbox each month?

Do you exhibit the characteristics of the priest and the Levite?

### 3. Christ's righteousness

For the times that we have fallen into the sin of APATHY, we need help. We need to look to another. We need to look to someone who has been perfect in every way for us. We need to look to Jesus Christ.

Jesus lived perfectly for you and kept his Father's commands to bear others' burdens and be concerned about their welfare. In our Gospel reading today, we heard how he did that in two ways. We heard about a time when he was tired from the press of his ministry and was looking for a place to get away for some quiet moments. But the crowds kept following him with their demands and their needs. First of all, Jesus, despite his fatigue, resumed teaching them the Word of God. He instructed them and taught them. And then secondly, he fed the 5000 men along with the women and children in a memorable miracle. In the end, he fed both their bodies and their souls. **Jesus perfectly kept this command of God and never succumbed to the sin of APATHY.**

And then, we hear in Romans 5: *"At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* When we were powerless, condemned, and dying in our sinful condition, he died for us. Christ did not scorn our sinful condition and refuse to help us in our need, but he died on the cross for the sin of the world and laid down his life so that we could be forgiven and could live with him in heaven forever.

**What grace that Jesus cared for us so much, and saved us in our dying condition!**

### 4. Guidance for the forgiven

So how can we glorify and honor him now? How can we avoid the sin of apathy in our lives?

**Scripture has a number of things to say about that:**

- **In our personal lives** – We pray for a change of attitude. Pray that God's grace touches your heart and moves you to break out of your self-centered shell and see the needs of your brother and sister around you. Pray that he would change you from an attitude of APATHY to one of SYMPATHY. Pray for a more sanctified view than the American Dream contains. As Christians we don't strive for "toleration." No, we follow the way of Christ and "love!" The love of Jesus permeates our lives and overflows into words and acts of concern and friendship for our neighbor.
- **In our church's culture** – Pray that God would give you a heart that loves your brothers and sisters here. If you want a fresh way to do that, perhaps you'll be happy to receive your new church pictorial directory in your mailbox today. Look at the page and the faces. Your prayer life and your life of good works will be prompted to good things. Come to events and gatherings where you can meet and know more of them.
- **In our church's ministry** – Be an active participant. Read our church and school updates on what's happening. Step in and volunteer in areas where you have talents and interests. Look for opportunities. Build up what we are doing with your words and attitude. Support your congregation with your offerings to the Lord. Pray for God's blessing hand upon our congregation.

As we close our look at APATHY, perhaps there's more here than you thought at first. It truly is an applicable topic today, as the devil

would tempt us toward such an attitude. Therefore, may we realize how sympathetic God was toward our problem of sin, so much so that he sent his Son to be our Savior. And may we exhibit the same attitude that Christ had in our words and actions as we live our lives to his glory! Amen.