

Sermon: 2019/07/14 (5th Sunday after Pentecost, Year C) - Amos 7:7-17; Psalm 82; Colossians 1:1-14 & Luke 10:25-37_BTR

Lawyers, apparently, to judge from our Gospel extract, are everywhere the same. And have been throughout history.

Oh, how they love to argue just for the sake of it!

To take a logical, clear, persuasive train-of-thought, and bend it back on itself, "sowing" confusion.

This is especially important when defending a patently guilty - *but wealthy(!)* - client:

Obscure the issue;

confuse the jury...

This is called, "blowing smoke," right?

Everyone has had experience of standing around an open campfire and then suddenly the wind changes direction and you find that your eyes begin to sting and tears stream down your face.

And what do you do?

You turn your face away.

You lose sight of whatever it is that you were previously focused on - a sausage or a gooey smore in the flames.

Your conversation is "derailed" too as you move around to find a place where you won't choke or splutter.

But it is one thing to manipulate language and reason by clever rhetoric in a courtroom of one's peers, and another to attempt it whilst *Jesus* was teaching.

And He has none of it!

'Who is my neighbor?'(!)

The questioner was deliberately trying to over-complicate the issue-at-hand.

And we are prone to do the same - *anything* to avoid actually doing what our Lord has (explicitly) commanded.

Which is, if we face it honestly, not complicated.

Thus, allow me to summarize:

One, love God. Not just a bit. But a lot. Love Him more than anything else that you love - your spouse, your life, your stuff.

Two, loving God isn't just a *feeling* - "in our hearts" - it is an *activity*; something we *do*. And, principally, we *do* it - we love God - by showing charity toward those that are in need. (This is the point of the parable of the Good Samaritan that follows.)

To love God the creator, then, is to be ready with our compassion for His creature. *Sometimes*, this will mean loading a bloodied victim of a violent crime onto a donkey - or, in 21st century McMinnville, into our Mustang - and paying the equivalent of 'two [silver] denarii' to see that poor person is made well again.

But, more than this, it *might* mean being like Amos (in our Old Testament reading this morning).

He lived a little later than Elijah and Elisha, and the situation that they had tried to amend had only got worse:

Israel was divided, quite literally, and at war with itself; under attack by foreign powers. And so there will have been *many* at that time and in that place who were hurting and traumatized and hungry: refugees fleeing battlefields, homes looted; maimed veterans cast aside to beg along the road.

And *each* one of them needed a "Good Samaritan," but what the prophet was enabled to see (by the Holy Spirit) was that *all* that suffering around him was symptomatic - *it was "down-stream"* - of a bigger, more serious and profound problem:

a lack of true religion - a lack of belief *and fear* of God.

- This is the meaning behind the dream about the 'plumbline'.

And so the *most* charitable, *most* compassionate thing that he - Amos - could do, therefore - *as a lover of God* - was address - with his words - *that* matter as the first priority: to confront the spiritual-moral waywardness that had birthed such chaos, that created such poverty.

And the Church is called to *do* the same.

Let's take a moment to reflect.