

On my recent vacation to Michigan, I had a chance for the first time to give my only grandson a bottle, feed him some crushed carrots, avocado, and prunes, and burp him. One day, while I was wearing my Dogfather shirt, Everett urped up on me. I mean everything he had for breakfast was on my shirt. Quite a clean up operation followed. But most of the time, it sure was fun to hang around him. We took a carriage ride around my daughter's subdivision in Grand Rapids several times. I read him the ABC book and sang the song, "Jesus Loves Me This I know" several times. We even went to church together at Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church. While my son-in-law and daughter participated in the whole worship service, I was out and about carrying Everett, so they could focus in on the readings and the message. His first nap time is from 9:00-10:30 A.M. on a usual basis, so that can cause an ornery baby for worship if not timed properly. As you can imagine, being a proud grandparent like many of you, I had to take some pictures and post them on Facebook. One of my favorites is where Everett and I are playing with balloons. He has this smile on this face that is precious, and as I looked at my self with my wrinkles, white hair, I looked pretty good as well. But let's be honest, sometimes when you take a selfie, you immediately delete it, since you look so rotten. We only want to post our best selfies to show to our friends or to post on Facebook.

Today, I would like you all to view an award winning Selfie of a Christian. Let's entitle our message today: "A Selfie We'd Like To See!" Can someone please show me what a Selfie of a Christian looks like? Jesus met a person who basically had the same question. He was an expert in all the Jewish laws of the land. His Selfie of Christianity was very similar to how people picture Christianity today – it's a religion of doing things. You gotta do something, and if you do all the right things enough, then you'll earn eternal life. You'll really look good before God. However, that's a bad selfie. Throw that one out.

Jesus could see that this man didn't understand how to get to heaven. And so Jesus decided to let the man talk. "What is written in the law," Jesus asked the lawyer. And the lawyer answered, "Love the Lord your God with all our heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." Notice how God's law didn't say, "Love God most of the time, or just try hard and God will be happy, or do the best you can." God's law demanded total and complete, 100%, 24-7 devotion, to God, and to other people.

Jesus said to the man, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live." In other words, if this is your picture of Christianity, then go for it. If you can do what's right, think right, every minute of every day, you are set for eternity. Obviously, Jesus knew that this lawyer could never measure up to God's standards. Nobody could. And deep down, the lawyer knew that too. That's why it says here that he wanted to "justify himself." And so the lawyer asked the question, "And who is my neighbor?" In other words, "I don't have to be nice to everybody, do I? I mean, that's unrealistic, isn't it? Who do I have to be nice to?" What the lawyer really wanted to know, is, what does Christianity look like?

And that's when Jesus tells the famous parable of the Good Samaritan. There once was a man, probably Jewish, traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. It was a windy, mountainous path, well-known for thieves and robbers. Sure enough, this man was robbed. He was stripped of his clothes, he was beaten, and he was left half dead in the ditch. Then a Jewish priest came walking down the path. Now of all the people who were

considered “good” by the Jews, a Jewish priest was considered to be one of the best. Certainly someday he would have a very high place in heaven, because of his life of good works in the temple. But look at what the priest does – Jesus describes how he crosses over to the other side of the road to avoid the man in the ditch, and keeps on walking.

Can you relate to that priest? Why would he do that? Maybe he was in a hurry, and he didn’t want to miss an appointment. Or maybe he didn’t want to get involved – it would be an unpleasant mess to help that man in the ditch. Maybe he figured, “I did enough good deeds for today at the temple. I’m all ‘good deeded out’.” Maybe he jumped to the conclusion that this man in the ditch was a drunk, and deserved whatever he got. Or maybe, he thought, “This man in the ditch isn’t my responsibility. Someone else will help him.”

Then a Levite comes by. Now the Levites weren’t priests, but they also worked full time at the temple, they were the priests gopher, as I call it. They carried the wood for the sacrifices. This priest comes up for a closer look, he is curious, but does nothing. I’m sure the lawyer who was listening to this story was very surprised that Jesus would picture these “religious” people as being so unkind. He was probably even more shocked when Jesus said that a Samaritan came by, and the Samaritan was the one who stopped to help.

Now the Samaritans were a group of people who were hated by the Jews. And the feeling was mutual – the Samaritans didn’t like the Jews either. There was some racial tension there. The Samaritan here would have had a good excuse to keep on going – after all, this man in the ditch was a Jew – “why should I help him?”

But instead of making excuses, we are told that the Samaritan had pity on the man who had been robbed. He got off his donkey, took time and effort to bandage the man’s wounds. He poured oil and wine on the man to kill the infection – and that wasn’t cheap. He put the man on his own donkey, while he walked that was an inconvenience. He set up the man in the inn where he was staying – once again, very inconvenient for the traveling Samaritan. He gave the innkeeper two silver coins – back in those days, that was enough money for someone to stay at the inn for 2 months. That was costly. And he even offered to reimburse the innkeeper for any extra expense.

After telling this story to the lawyer, Jesus asked him, “Which of these three was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” And, of course, the lawyer pointed out the merciful one. Jesus told him, “Go, and do likewise.”

Why did Jesus tell this story to that lawyer? Was Jesus telling him what he needed to do in order to earn eternal life? “If only you would act more like that good Samaritan, then God would let you into heaven” – is that the point? Is that a correct picture of Christianity?

The answer is no. Jesus wanted that lawyer to hear this story and think to himself, “I have sinned. I haven’t been like that good Samaritan. I’ve passed by people who have needed my help. I’ve made excuses. I can’t earn eternal life because of my sin.” Jesus wants the same reaction from us. “I know I’m supposed to be like that Samaritan, but I’m not. I’m more like that priest than I am like that good Samaritan.” And we all have been guilty of committing that sin in our lives, haven’t we? When people are in need, we’re usually pretty good at figuring out why we don’t have to help them – someone else will take care of it, it’s not my problem, I don’t have time, that person deserves it. You and I are sometimes just like that priest, ignoring people who are in need, and making

excuses in our heads in order to make ourselves feel better.

When you realize that, what do you do? You take that sin to God, and you confess it. That's what Christianity looks like! "Heavenly Father, please forgive me, for I have failed to help others. Sometimes I do, but often times, I make excuses, and pass by on the other side of the road. Heavenly Father, please forgive me." That's part of Christianity - confessing your sins to God. But then there's the other part, and what's that? It's trusting that your sin has been forgiven. We say to God, "God, thank you for taking my sin away. You put that sin on Jesus. And now I'm forgiven. Thank you." That's Christianity too - trusting that your sin has been forgiven by Christ. Confessing and trusting - that's what Christianity looks like.

If you think about it, you and I are that traveler in trouble. As he walked along that road, he was ambushed by thieves, and didn't stand a chance. As you and I entered this world, we were ambushed by sin, and we didn't stand a chance. Our sinful nature took over us. Our sinful world keeps tempting us. And the Devil is always working on us. And by the time they're done with us, we're like that traveler, lying in the ditch. Spiritually, we're helpless as he was, covered with our sins, lying in a spiritual ditch with no one to help us.

But then, someone comes to help you. Who is the Good Samaritan, in the story of your life? It's Jesus. And think about all the effort he put forth to help you out of your sin. It wasn't easy. And it was expensive for Jesus to save you. It cost him what? It cost him his own life. The Good Samaritan sacrificed time and money and effort to help that man in the ditch. Jesus sacrificed everything for you. He took pity on you, when he saw you overcome by your sin. And so he saved you, by dying on the cross for you, and rising from the dead. He is the Good Samaritan in the story of your life.

That's what Christianity looks like. It's not about you trying to prove to everyone how good you are. Christianity is about Christ, saving you, the traveler in trouble, rescuing you by making a sacrifice for you. And now that you have been rescued, how will you want to live? How can you say, "Thank you," to your Lord, for all the good things he has done for you? You can look for ways to help others. You can look for ways to be a Good Samaritan to others.

And so for me, I'll start with the people I know - my family - how can I go out of my way to help them? I'm sure there are many ways. There's my church family - how can I be a good Samaritan to these people I see every Sunday? But I won't stop there. Sometimes God plops down total strangers right in front of you, and gives you the opportunity to help them.

But that's Christianity. It's nothing flashy. There's not audience applauding your good works. It's just you, in a dirty shirt, by yourself. Sometimes, that's what Christianity looks like. It's going way out of your way to help someone else, just as Jesus went way out to help you. Maybe you don't say anything religious while you're doing it, but you're living your faith, and reflecting what Jesus did for you. You do that because Christ was your Good Samaritan - he died for you - and when you help someone else, it's your way of glorifying God.

And that is A Selfie We'd Like to See in all of us! Time for the ultimate Selfie! (picture taken with IPHONE by pastor of himself and congregation)