

July 11, 2010 – Seventh Sunday after Pentecost (8:00 a.m. service)

The Rev. Canon Robert G. Riegel

Luke 10:25-37

We sometimes don't pay very much attention to the Collect for the Day. It comes at the beginning of the service and can be easily overlooked. In fact last Sunday, with our new bishop in attendance, I read the collect for the previous Sunday by mistake.

Let's look for a moment at the collect for today printed on the service sheet. It traces back for many centuries in Gregorian and Sarum rites. It was in the Book of Common Prayer in 1549 and has used continually since then. It starts with a request. "O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you." It is certainly my hope that when I pray God will hear my prayer. Then it says, "And grant".... now this is where I often make my list of things that I want God to do; God to take care of, as if the problem is that God does not know the needs and conditions of my life and the world. So this collect has an important shocker in what it asks of God. "Grant that your people may know and understand what things they ought to do." So this is not dumping problems onto God, but rather asking God to give us knowledge and understanding of the things we should be doing. When in prayer or in Bible study or in reading the newspaper I become more aware of what I should be doing I often back away because the problems are so big and too much is asked of me.

This collect understands that. After God grants us the knowledge of what things we ought to do, the prayer continues, "that your people may also have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them." With God's grace I have often been able to do more than I thought I could. Like stand here and preach a sermon. Like responding to what seems the infinite needs of Haiti and the poor. Like giving more than I thought I could for the restoration of the cathedral and the renewal of the church. Like being a loving

husband and a good father. When we accept the greater picture of what we ought to be doing, we discover that it is not all that difficult.

Now you all know the parable of the Good Samaritan our Gospel reading for today. It is a story of love crossing boundaries of nationalism, tradition and faith. It is a story of generous giving of time and of money and of taking risk. We are not told why the Good Samaritan showed mercy to a stranger. We can guess that he had received some special love from parents and family and knew something of God's love. The Gospel ends with a message for the young lawyer and a message for us. Jesus said, "Go and do likewise." And we clearly know that we should live that way following Jesus teaching to love our neighbor as ourselves. But such love seems often out of our minds and out of our reach. So when we hear the words "Go and do likewise," we need to say this collect. O Lord, mercifully hear the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may both know and understand what things they ought to do, and also to have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Without God we will accomplish less and less. With God we will be more and do far more than we believed possible. God richly gives guidance and strength to those who seek to act in his name.