

Sermon  
Fifth Sunday After Pentecost with Holy Baptism  
Sunday, July 13th, 2025  
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa  
The Reverend Victoria Scott

Readings: [AMOS 7:7-17; PSALM 82; COLOSSIANS 1:1-14; LUKE 10:25-37](#)

Posture. Body language. It can say quite a lot about what's going on in our heads and hearts. Imagine this. You're going to mingle in a room full of people that you don't know. You look around the room and you see someone with their arms crossed. Their eyes are fixed on a spot on the wall, somewhere above your head. You see another person with their head down, deliberately, arms across their body, eyes cast on the floor. These are closed postures. These communicate a message of detachment, and non-engagement. We're all capable of taking these closed postures, but this isn't the posture of our Christian faith. It isn't the body language that God invites us into through Jesus...

Today's Gospel brings us a parable that will be familiar to many of us. It's natural to leap to wondering "who am I" and to reach for examples of the ways that we are the Samaritan. It's natural to feel a bit of judgement about the priest and Levite walking on by and not helping the man. But instead of doing that, I invite you to think about posture and body language in this story. Close your eyes and imagine the priest walking from Jerusalem to Jericho. For whatever reason, his posture and body language are closed. In the passage we read that he saw the man, but who knows what he really saw. Perhaps he was so fixated on what he had to tend to in Jericho that he didn't even really take in the man lying vulnerable and in distress. Perhaps he was so used to prioritizing his responsibilities and obligations as a priest that it didn't occur to him to stop. What did the Levite see? Perhaps he saw danger on that road. Perhaps he saw the man and immediately fixed his heart and mind on whether those who were responsible for his injuries were still lurking nearby. Whatever the reason, they were closed off, and not able to engage. The Samaritan was able to engage, though. He saw the man in need, and responded with eyes, heart and arms open.

And so what if this story is not about judging the priest and Levite for not helping? Not about trying to be like the Samaritan and then feeling guilty when we haven't

behaved like him? What if it's about the posture that Jesus invites us to take? What if it's an invitation to consider the body language of Christianity? What if it's an invitation to consider the things that get in the way of our living with eyes, heart, mind, and arms open?

Have you noticed that the word "good" isn't actually in the text? We've made this parable about being good. What if God isn't interested in us being "good", or being "better"? We can do those things on our own. We can follow formulas and behave in certain ways all on our own. What if God is interested in us being new? What if God is interested in us, joining with God's Spirit already at work, to change the world, to make it new. What if God is interested in us letting go of the things - judgements, certainties, fears - that keep us closed, so that we can be made new?

I mentioned the body language of priest, Levite and Samaritan, but what about the body language of the wounded man? Beaten, half-dead on the side of the road? He couldn't have assumed a closed posture if he'd wanted to! And, he might well have wanted to - he might well have wanted to refuse help from the Samaritan. Samaritans were despised and ostracized by Jews at the time. The man wounded on the side of the road couldn't help but have an open, receptive posture, and in that posture he was changed in his encounter with the Samaritan. He was healed in the encounter. He was made new in it!

In a few minutes we're going to baptize Sitara. It is a joy to celebrate this in community, and this sacrament – this outward and visible sign of an inward, invisible grace – points us toward the posture of Christianity. Sitara and I will turn to one another at the font. I'll look at her as I pour water on her head. I can't do that with my eyes fixed on a spot across the room. I can't do that with my eyes on the floor, with my arms across my chest.

Arms open. Eyes willing to meet the eyes of another. Eyes willing to see the needs, and the hopes and dreams of another. Ears willing to really listen. *This* is the posture and perspective - the way - of Christianity. It's a receptive way, and a perceptive way. It's a way that is, above all else, about love.

When God came to us in Jesus it was with a question, with a request. By coming to us as a baby, *we are asked to receive, and hold God's love.*

Are we willing to receive and perceive God's love in any and all places? Are we willing to reach out and take hold of it, cradling it, holding it as we would a baby? Are we willing to see and hold all people – all of creation – with that same love and care? Are we willing to change the world with love, and be changed in the process? Are we willing to be made new as God is making all things new?

Today, Sitora is saying yes to that question! She is promising to adopt a receptive posture, a posture and perspective of openness, of love, and of care in her life. She is promising to bring change and be changed. She is being made new in her baptism. Our baptismal promises remind us that we are continually made new as followers of Jesus.

John Shelby Spong said this:

“Christianity is, I believe, about expanded life, heightened consciousness and achieving a new humanity. It is not about closed minds, supernatural interventions, a fallen creation, guilt, original sin or divine rescue.”

This expresses an open, receptive posture in life. It's an invitation to look at life through a lens of love. This is the posture and perspective we are baptizing Sitora into this morning. This is the posture and perspective that will take us, as a church, into the future.

Let this time here this morning remind you of the posture that God invites us into, in and through Jesus. Let the sacrament and blessing of baptism remind you to open your arms and ears and hearts and minds and to look at the world with love. Let it remind you to let go of judgement and certainties that keep you closed off, and resistant to change. Let the sacrament and blessing of the Eucharist remind you of this. Feel openness and receptivity as you extend your arms to receive Communion or a blessing. Then, go into the world with a posture and perspective of love. Open your arms, eyes, ears and hearts and minds, in Jesus name. Amen.