***Windows oN Easter***

**Lenten Worship Series – Week 1**

***Window of Love – The Good Samaritan***

**February 21, 2021**

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| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES**Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

***Window of Love***

**Call to Worship:**

Our search for God and His search for us meet at windows in our everyday experience. We must be aware, at all times and in all places, because windows are everywhere, and at any time we may find one…or one may find us. *Windows on Easter*, our theme for our Lenten series, gives a fresh perspective on the Easter story by looking through the “windows” of some of the people who were there…. We would do well to see what they saw and feel what they felt—that we might be able to learn what they learned.

(*Windows of the Soul*, p. 17; *Windows on Easter*, p.12)

Our first window is the window of love…

***8****Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.****9****The commandments…are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”****10****Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.*

(Romans 13:8-10, NIV)

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| **SB#39/HC#121 – Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee** | TB-367 – EuropeHC-121 | HTD3-T11 (4 vs.)HCD11-T11 |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#8 – Come, let us all unite to sing** | TB-293 – God is love | HTD5-T7 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#25 – God’s love to me is wonderful** | TB-130 – God’s love is wonderfulTB-128 – Faith is the victory | HTD8-T5 (3 vs.)No CD |
| **SB#26 – Great is Thy faithfulness** | TB-641 – same | HTD1-T10 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#31/HC#93 – Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!** | TB-771 – Nicaea HC-93 | HTD2-T6 (4 vs.)HCD8-T13 |
| **SB#34 – I believe that God the Father** | TB-360 – Bethany | HTD11-T1 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#52 – O worship the king** | TB-479 – HanoverHC-221 | HTD4-T4 (3 vs.)HCD21-T11 |
| **SB#56/HC#251 – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty** | TB-735 – Lobe den HerrenHC-251 | HTD4-T11 (4 vs.)HCD24-T11 |
| **SB#97/HC#221 – Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim** | TB-479 – HanoverHC-221 | HTD4-T4 (3 vs.)HCD21-T11 |
| **SB#241 – And can it be** | TB-445 – Sagina | HTD4-T13 (4 vs.) |
| **HC#273 – In the Sanctuary** | HC-273 | HCD26-T13 |

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| **Children’s Moment – The Good Samaritan** |

***Who is My Neighbor?***

**Choric Reading – Luke 10:25-37**

**The Parable of the Good Samaritan**

**Leader: 25**Just then a scholar *of the Hebrew Scriptures* tried to trap Jesus.

**Scholar:**  Teacher, what must I do to experience the eternal life?

**Jesus**: **26**What is written in the *Hebrew* Scriptures? How do you interpret their answer to your question?

**Scholar:**  **27**You shall love— “love the Eternal One your God with everything you have: all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind”—and “love your neighbor as yourself.”

**Jesus:**  **28***Perfect.* Your answer is correct. Follow these commands and you will live.

**Leader: 29**The scholar *was frustrated by this response because he* was hoping to make himself appear smarter than Jesus.

**Scholar:**  Ah, but who is my neighbor?

**Jesus:**  **30**This fellow was traveling down from Jerusalem to Jericho when some robbers mugged him. They took his clothes, beat him to a pulp, and left him naked and bleeding and in critical condition. **31**By chance, a priest was going down that same road, and when he saw the wounded man, he crossed over to the other side and passed by. **32**Then a Levite who was on his way to assist in the temple also came and saw the victim lying there, and he too kept his distance. **33**Then a despised Samaritan journeyed by. When he saw the fellow, he felt compassion for him. **34**The Samaritan went over to him, stopped the bleeding, applied some first aid, and put the poor fellow on his donkey. He brought the man to an inn and cared for him through the night.

**35**The next day, the Samaritan took out *some money*—two days’ wages to be exact—and paid the innkeeper, saying, “Please take care of this fellow, and if this isn’t enough, I’ll repay you next time I pass through.”

**36**Which of these three proved himself a neighbor to the man who had been mugged by the robbers?

**Scholar:**  **37**The one who showed mercy to him.

**Jesus:**  Well then, go and behave like that Samaritan.

**Leader:** We may quote scripture and recite platitudes on love and God, but unless we are willing to get involved in the lives of others, we are only blowing smoke. The Samaritan treated and bandaged the wounds. He set the injured man on his donkey. He took him to an inn and cared for him throughout the night. The Samaritan could have said to himself, “I give regularly to my church.  I donate to The Salvation Army every Christmas. I have done my part.” But he didn’t. As the scriptures say, he had compassion...and he acted on it.

(Luke 10:25-37,The Voice)

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| **SB#418/HC#269 – Every day they pass me by (People need the Lord)** | TB-797 – same HC-269 | No CDHCD12-T19 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#467 – If human hearts are often tender** | TB-17 – How much more | HTD1-T13 (3 vs.) |
| **HC#154 – Moved with Compassion** | HC-154 | HCD14-T14 |

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| **Drama – Jacob’s Inn** |

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| **SB#608/HC#262 – Make me a channel of Your peace** | TB-751 – same HC-262 | No CDHCD25-T12 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#595/HC#173 – In this quiet moment** | TB-186 – sameHC-173 | No CDHCD16-T13 |
| **HC#174 – Reach out in love** | HC-174  | HCD16-T14 |
| **SB#935/HC#203 – There are people hurting (They Need Christ)** | TB-886 – same HC-203 | No CDHCD19-T13 |
| **SB#699/HC#207 – Every promise we can make (Grace Alone)** | TB-640 – sameHC-207 | No CDHCD19-T17 |

[*Please print Congregational Prayer in bulletin*]

**Congregational Prayer:**

Dear Jesus,

Give me a heart of compassion that I may love my neighbor the way the Good Samaritan loved his. Give me eyes that do not look away and feet that do not turn to the other side of the road.

Who is my neighbor, Lord?

* Is it the shut-in, stripped of her independence by arthritis, beaten down by the years, hanging on to life by a thread?
* Is it the AIDS victim, stripped of a long life, battered by an insidious virus, his life silently flickering away unnoticed in hospice?
* Is it the bag lady, stripped of her home, broken by the hard reality of the pavement, kept alive by the pocket change of a few kind strangers?
* Is it the old man on the street, stripped of his dignity, beaten down by alcohol, half-starved as he rummages through a dumpster for his daily bread?
* Is it the woman next door, stripped of her happiness, black and blue from a bad marriage, wishing she were dead?
* Is it the man down the hall, stripped of his assets, battered by the economy, whose business is bankrupt?

Deep down inside, Lord, my heart knows the answer. I don’t even have to ask. These are my neighbors.

Help me to love them.

Deliver me from stillborn emotions, which look at those on the roadside with a tear in my eye but without the least intention of helping them. Impress upon my heart, Lord, that the smallest act of kindness is better than the greatest of kind intentions.

Help me to realize that although I cannot do everything to alleviate the suffering in this world, I can do something. And even if that something is a very little thing, it is better than turning my head and walking away… Amen.

(*Moments with the Savior*, pp. 220-221)

**Missionary Moment for World Services/Self-Denial**

For World Services/Self-Denial information, see the “*Goals for a Brighter Future*” resources at: <https://centralmissions.org/gfbf/>

**Announcements and Offering**

**Testimony of Faith –** [*Choose someone from the congregation who can testify on this theme.*]

**Message – Window of Love – The Good Samaritan**

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| **SB#699/HC#207 – Every promise we can make (Grace Alone)** | TB-640 – sameHC-207 | No CDHCD19-T17 |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#467 – If human hearts are often tender** | TB-17 – How much more | HTD1-T13 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#626 – The Savior of men came to seek and to save** | TB-484 – The old rustic bridge | No CD |
| **HC#154 – Moved with Compassion** | HC-154 | HCD14-T14 |
| **SB#595/HC#173 – In this quiet moment** | TB-186 – same HC-173 | No CDHCD16-T13 |
| **HC#174 – Reach out in Love** | HC-174  | HCD16-T14 |
| **SB#935/HC#203 – They need Christ** | TB-886 – sameHC-203 | No CDHCD19-T13 |
| **SB#608/HC#262 – Make me a channel of Your peace** | TB-751 – sameHC-262 | No CDHCD25-T12 |
| **SB#418/HC#269 – Every day they pass me by (People need the Lord)** | TB-797 – sameHC-269 | No CDHCD25-T19 |

***Go and Do Likewise!***

**Benediction:**

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. Amen.

(2 Corinthians 13:11, NIV)

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| **SB#819/HC#202 – O Church, arise** | TB-777 – same HC-202 | No CDHCD19-T12 |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#241 – And can it be** | TB-445 – Sagina  | HTD4-T13 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#936 – Wanted, hearts baptized with fire (*omit Chorus*)** | TB-370 – HyfrydolTB-394 – Austria  | HTD1-T14 (3 vs.)HTD1-T2 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#938 – We have caught the vision splendid** | TB-361 – BlaenwernTB-394 – Austria  | HTD5-T3 (3 vs.)HTD1-T2 (3 vs.) |

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| **Lent 2021 Week #1** |
| **DRAMA****Jacob’s Inn****By Martyn Scott Thomas**© Copyright 2000 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. |
| **Topic:** | Relationships: Love for Others. |
| **Scripture:** | Luke 10:25-37 |
| **Synopsis:** | A man tries to settle his account with an inn keeper. |
| **Characters:** | **Jacob -** An inn keeper**Micah -** A traveler |
| **Props/Costumes:** | A table or counter with a bell. A sign by the bell that says, “Ring bell for service.” |
| **Setting:** | The lobby of an Inn. |
| **Running time:** | 3 minutes |

[*Jacob is behind the counter of his inn, tending to his daily business. Micah walks up and rings the bell.*]

**Jacob:** [*Turning toward Micah - surprised*] Ah, you’re up. We’ve been wondering when you’d come around.

**Micah:** [*A bit confused*] You’ve been wondering? Do you know me? Because, I have to admit, I’m feeling a bit groggy and I’m not really sure where I am or how I got here?

**Jacob:** Well, my friend, welcome to Jacob’s Inn. We’re always open. [*Extends hand*] I’m Jacob.

**Micah:** [S*hakes hand*] I’m Micah. Jacob’s Inn, huh? Never heard of it. And in what city might you be located?

**Jacob:** Just outside of Jerusalem, right off the Jericho road.

**Micah:** Jerusalem? Jericho road? Wait a minute, . . . now I’m starting to remember. I was traveling from Jericho to Jerusalem when . . .

**Jacob:** You were attacked by robbers and left for dead.

**Micah:** That’s right. How did you know?

**Jacob:** That’s what he told me.

**Micah:** That’s what who told you?

**Jacob:** The man who brought you in three days ago.

**Micah:** Who was he?

**Jacob:** I don’t know. I was hoping you could tell me.

**Micah:** He didn’t leave a name?

**Jacob:** No, he just left you. And instructions to look after you until you were well.

**Micah:** Was he a policeman? Because I thought I saw a policeman while I was lying on the road.

**Jacob:** No, he wasn’t a policeman. They avoid the Jericho road after dark. I think even they are afraid of the robbers.

**Micah:** Could he have been a paramedic or a doctor of some sort?

**Jacob:** No. If he had been a doctor, he would’ve taken you to the hospital, not here to Jacob’s Inn.

**Micah:** This really doesn’t make sense. Can you describe him? Maybe if you can identify his tribe, I can locate his family or something.

**Jacob:** His tribe?

**Micah:** Yes, what tribe of Israel did he come from?

**Jacob:** My friend, I don’t think he was Jewish.

**Micah:** Of course, he was Jewish. Who else would help me?

**Jacob:** From his accent, I think he was a Samaritan.

**Micah:** [*In disgust*] A Samaritan. Don’t mock me! I spit at Samaritans. Why would one of them help me?

**Jacob:** That, I can’t say. All I know is that if he didn’t help you, you would have been dead three days ago.

**Micah:** I’d almost rather be dead than accept the help of one of [*choosing his word carefully*] those.

**Jacob:** That’s your choice.

**Micah:** So, how much do I owe you? [*Reaches for his wallet*]

**Jacob:** My friend, you don’t owe a thing. The Samaritan paid all of your expenses before he left.

**Micah:** That’s nonsense. I am a proud Jew and I will pay my own debt.

**Jacob:** I’m afraid you couldn’t pay it even if you wanted to. You were robbed. You have no money.

**Micah:** But, my family lives close by. I can go and get the money for you.

**Jacob:** There is no need. Your bill has been paid in full. I cannot accept anything over that amount.

**Micah:** I can’t believe this. First, I’m almost beaten to death and now, I must accept the aid of a Samaritan.

**Jacob:** Excuse me, but shouldn’t you be thankful that someone was willing to stop to help you?

**Micah:** I’ll be thankful when I get home to my own family, when I’m with my own people. Well, if my bill is paid, I’ll be on my way.

**Jacob:** You owe me nothing. I wish you safe travel. Shalom.

**Micah:** [*Exits*] Shalom.

[*Blackout*]

***Windows oN Easter***

**Children’s Moment – Week 1**

***Window of Love – The Good Samaritan***

**February 21, 2021**

**by Martyn Scott Thomas**

**Scripture:** **Luke 10:25-37**

[*The Narrator should call the children of the congregation forward and have them sit around his/her chair.*]

**Narrator:** This morning we’re going to look at the story of the Good Samaritan. Does anybody know that story? [*allow the children to answer*]

 That’s good. Now, if you saw someone who was hurt, would you stop and help them? [*allow the children to answer*] There were three people on the road that day that passed the injured man. The first two were a priest and a temple worker, but neither of them stopped. Why do you think they didn’t stop? [*allow the children to answer*]

 The third man was a Samaritan. Does anybody know what a Samaritan is? Samaritans were related to the Jews, but they weren’t 100% Jewish and the Jews were not very nice to them. In fact, they treated the Samaritans badly. So, if someone who had always been mean to you was hurt, would you help them? That’s a little harder to do. But that’s what the Samaritan did. He helped a stranger, someone who probably wouldn’t help him.

 And that’s what Jesus wants us to do. He wants us to be kind and help anybody, even if it’s someone we might not like or who might not like us.

 Let’s pray. Dear Jesus, please help us to be kind to everyone we meet. Help us to be helpful to others, even if it’s hard to do. Bless us today. Amen.

 I’ll see you back here next week. [*dismiss the children*]

***Windows oN Easter***

**Lenten Sermon Helps – Week 1**

***Window of Love – The Good Samaritan***

**February 21, 2021**

**Scripture:** Luke 10:25-37

**[Material from *Moments with the Savior* by Ken Gire, pp. 214-220]**

Who is my neighbor?

The question is asked by a lawyer trying more to settle an uneasy conscience than to settle a debate. He finds the answer to his question in the most unexpected of places—on a dusty road leading out of Jerusalem.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho slopes steadily downward through a wilderness of rocks and ravines and crumbly outcroppings of limestone. The only color comes from the paint of the rising sun as it brushes a streak of pink across the chalky hills. The road snakes through those hills for seventeen miles, writhing perilously close to steep ravines and winding around bare shoulders of rock.

In the twists and turns of that road hide hardened criminals, lying in wait the way a tarantula waits for an unsuspecting beetle to fall into its trap. For that reason, the road has earned the reputation as “The Way of Blood.”

Down that road comes a tired priest. The robbers recognize him to be a religious man from the clothes he wears, and so they allow him safe passage. Some things are sacred, even to criminals. *Besides,* they reason, *priests never carry anything of value anyway.*

The priest walks with his back toward the eight days of service he has just given in the temple. From morning till evening he has served there, instructing the people in the straight-and-narrow ways of the Law. For the times they have strayed, he has made intercession. Burning incense. Saying prayers. Offering sacrifices. The days have been long and tiresome with tedious attention to detail given to everything from trying legal cases to trimming the wicks of the temple’s oil lamps.

But now he is off duty on his way home to Jericho, that lush, worldly suburb of the holy city.

The priest passes the time by meditating on a psalm, but the graceful rhythms of Hebrew poetry are jarred to a stop by the guttural moans coming from the roadside.

There lies a clump of naked flesh. The priest squints. It looks like a fellow Jew, but it’s hard to tell. The man has been beaten raw, and a seepage of blood darkens the dirt beneath him.

The Law says that if you see your brother’s donkey or ox fall down by the way, you should not hide yourself from it but should help it up. How much more, then, should you help if your brother himself has fallen?

But that’s not the portion of the Law that comes to the priest’s mind. He thinks of the passage which states that anybody who touches a dead person shall be rendered unclean for seven days.

The priest reasons to himself: *The poor man’s barely alive. If I stop and help him, he could die in my arms.* Then he thinks of the elaborate ritual he would have to go through to purify himself, and frankly, he has had enough of rituals for one week. Besides, if the priest is rendered unclean, that would interfere with his religious duties at the local synagogue in Jericho, and he is slated to teach Torah classes all the next week.

So instead of risking the defilement that would keep him from fulfilling his religious responsibilities, the priest turns and walks away. After all, teaching is his gift, and it wouldn’t be a wise use of his talent to have to bury it for a week.

A Levite is the next to come down the road. As a subordinate to the priest, he assists in the temple worship. But he too is off work and anxious to get home.

His steps are brisk. He needs to be in Jericho by noon, in time for the city council meeting where he has been asked to give the opening invocation. It is an honor and an important step in his career. It will give him greater visibility and a greater circle of influence.

The opportunity should open a lot of doors for him. It’s a good chance to rub shoulders with the council members and the top merchants. Good givers, those merchants. And they know how to treat their holy men. Once you get a little recognition, that is. And once you get in with the right people.

Yes, this is the opportunity he has been waiting for—to bring religion to the marketplace, to make a difference in the lives of the community’s key leaders, and maybe to make a denarius or two on the side.

The Levite’s mind dances with the possibilities. He thinks of speaking engagements that will come his way, of sitting at banquets in the seat of honor, of being invited to the best social functions, of being given luxurious imported goods at cost or, better still, being given them free as a token of someone’s appreciation for his insightful teaching.

His steps grow brisk on the downward road to Jericho.

But his stride is broken as the bend in the road reveals the man who has been beaten by robbers. He looks at the man and then at the angle of the sun. He has to make Jericho by noon. He has a commitment to keep. *Surely somebody will come along in a minute or two,* he reasons as he picks up his pace and walks to the other side of the road.

Then comes a Samaritan riding his donkey down the dusty stretch of road. He has been in Jerusalem on business and is on his way to Jericho to complete some business there before returning home.

But the business climate in Judea is not favorable toward Samaritans. The Jews despise them. They don’t receive them into their homes, believing that if they did they would be storing up curses upon their children. And they would no more eat at a Samaritan’s table than they would at a swine’s trough. The hatred is so intense that Jews publicly curse them in the synagogue, asking God to exclude them from eternal life.

The Samaritan tries to shake off the rude way he has been treated, having seen his own people treat Jews just as badly.

As he rounds a bend in the road, he sees the wounded man lying there. The Samaritan’s heart compels him to stop. It is so full of compassion that it has no room for questions. The man is a Jew, but it makes no difference what race he is, or what religion, or what region of the country he is from. He’s a human being in need, and as far as the Samaritan’s concerned, that’s all that matters.

From his heavily packed donkey he takes a wineskin and an earthen jar of oil. He rushes to the man’s side and pours wine on his wounds to disinfect them and oil to soothe them. He tears trips from his garment to sop up the blood and to staunch the life that is ebbing away. Gingerly, he shoulders the man onto his donkey, steadying him as he walks by his side.

In a couple of miles they arrive at an inn. The Samaritan could just drop the man off, slip the innkeeper a night’s rent, and leave. But he doesn’t do that. He stays the night, watching over the wounded man during those first, critical twenty-four hours. Sponging him down. Changing his bandages. Giving him a few sips of water every time he regains consciousness.

The next day the Samaritan must be on his way, but the wounded man is in too critical a condition to travel. The Samaritan empties his leather pouch. Into the innkeeper’s palm clink two silver coins, an equivalent of two days’ wages. The Samaritan not only goes out on a financial limb for the man, but he goes into debt, obligating himself for any expenses the innkeeper may incur in nursing this total stranger back to health.

As far as we know, the Samaritan did nothing for the stranger’s soul. He uttered no prayer, quoted no verse, left no tract. All he did was to give the man the physical help he needed. And that seemed to be enough. At least it was enough in the eyes of the one who told the story.

In demonstrating what it meant to be a good neighbor, the Samaritan defined the meaning of love. Love doesn’t look away. And it doesn’t walk away. It involves itself. It inconveniences itself. It indebts itself.

When Jesus concludes the story, he asks the legal expert, “Which of these proved to be his neighbor?” The stately Jewish man almost chokes on his answer. He can’t quite bring himself to say, “The Samaritan.” All he can say is, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Jewish hatred toward the Samaritans was both racial and religious. Samaritans were half-breeds, being a mixture of Jewish and Assyrian blood, and from the Jew’s perspective they were heretics.

They worshiped at a temple on Mount Gerazim, in defiance to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. They accepted only the first five books of the Bible as their sacred scripture, rather than the entire Jewish Old Testament. They established their own priesthood, independent from the one the Jews had, and they disregarded the traditions of the Jewish elders.

Knowing Jewish sentiment toward Samaritans, can you imagine how hard it must have been for that Jewish legal expert to have the central commandment in Jewish Law illustrated to him by a man whose race he utterly despised?

Just a chapter earlier in Luke’s gospel, as entire Samaritan village rejected Jesus.

*And he sent messengers on ahead. They went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” But Jesus turned and rebuked them. Then he and his disciples went to another village.* (Luke 9:52-56, *NIV*)

Knowing that Jesus was a Jew and realizing his recent rejection by the Samaritans, you would think he would have cast the Samaritan in the role of the man who fell among thieves. Or worse, as one of the men who turned away.

But Jesus didn’t do that. He made the Samaritan the hero of his story.

*The hero.*

When his disciples wanted to curse the Samaritans for their unneighborly attitude, Jesus blessed them instead by using one of them as an example of everything a good neighbor should be.

Giving a blessing in place of a curse.

That is how the Savior lived. That is how he died. And maybe, in the final analysis, that is the most instructive thing about this parable.

(*Moments with the Savior*, pp. 214-220)

**[Material from *Windows of the Soul* by Ken Gire, pp. 201-204]**

The following is a picture I was part of, if only for an evening.

Judy and I were driving on the freeway in Fort Worth in the drenching rain when we came across a stalled car on the shoulder of the road where two women were standing in the downpour. We stopped, picked them up, and took the off-ramp to the nearest phone booth. As we pulled up to one, our headlights revealed a man beating a woman. I jumped out of the car to break it up, and the man told me it was his “old lady,” as if that somehow sanctioned the abuse. I stepped between them and broke up the fight, and he stood with clenched fist and asked if I wanted to fight. Before I could answer, the woman fell to the ground and hit her head on the concrete. We both bent down to help her. Her head was bleeding and her eyes rolled back in her head. I told him I thought she might be pretty badly hurt and that we needed to call an ambulance. He told me then that he had been in jail and couldn’t “stick around.” And in an incongruous moment of tenderness, he touched my hand, which was holding his “old lady,” and gently squeezed it.
“Thanks,” he said, and ran off.

Within a few minutes the ambulance and police came. The woman was high on something but, as it turned out, not badly hurt. She refused to go to the hospital and lied to the police about her name. She told them it was Kathy. It was actually Denise, unless of course she had lied to me. When the police questioned her, she refused to file charges against the man who beat her. Another incongruous moment. An act of protection, maybe. Maybe even an act of love.

Since the police wouldn’t take her and the ambulance wouldn’t take her, we took her. She was twenty-three, we found out, had gotten pregnant at thirteen and had given the baby up for adoption, had been living with the man who beat her for the past three-and-a-half years. His name was Buckwheat, she told us. She had no friends and only twenty-six cents to her name.

We took her to Judy’s mother’s house, where her mother washed her hair and cleaned the cut on her head, served her some chicken noodle soup along with some Ritz crackers and a cup of coffee. We cleaned her up, dried her off, fed her, gave her our address and the address of a nearby church, and tried as best we could to provide a little shelter from the stormy life she had. After a few hours, she asked us to take her to a convenience store on West Berry, near where she lived. She was afraid if she was gone too long the man who beat her would beat her again. We talked to her about going to a shelter for battered women, but it would just cause more trouble, she told us. And so we dropped her off, sadly, knowing that though we had dried her off, we were sending her back into the storm.

At the time, I didn’t ask the picture what it required of me. It all happened so fast. I didn’t have time to think, just to react. It was clear what was required of me, to step between the man and the woman he was beating. I entered the picture of this battered woman’s life with what amounted to only a few touches of human kindness. Nothing more. It was help, but only for an evening. Nothing more. Although there is a little more. I still think of Denise and Buckwheat now and then, and whenever I do, I dab a little prayer into the paint, hoping it might somehow change the picture. And if indeed more things are wrought by prayer than this would dreams of, who knows what may happen? Maybe nothing. Maybe everything.

My point in telling you this story is that the very least we should do is look. If we turn our head away, our heart will go with it. But if we look, maybe what we see there will in some way draw us into the picture. If we look with the right eyes, what we see will cause us to dig into the pockets of our humanity for something more than a little loose change. A sympathetic feeling, maybe. Or a heartfelt prayer. A kind word. A gentle touch. An understanding smile. Perhaps a listening ear. A hot meal, if only for a day. A shelter from the storm, if only for an evening.

And why?

Why should we stop? Why should we look? Why should we enter the picture?

Because it is what Jesus did. And what He would do if He were here. It is to those people He came. And to those people He wants to come again. But He is in heaven. And if He is to come to them at all, it must be through us.

At these windows of the soul, something is required of us. It is for us to listen and find out what that something is. And it is for us to respond with our lives. We can’t do everything. But we can do something. And if it is done in His name, even if it’s a very little thing, it is something beautiful.

The Vatican City houses some of the most beautiful works of art in the history of humanity. The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The white marble sculpture of David. Saint Peter’s Cathedral. The Pietà. But these are not the Church’s great art.

These are:

“I tell you the truth,” said Jesus of the widow’s offering at the temple, “this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

“Only one thing is needed,” said Jesus to Martha, regarding her sister’s quiet act of devotion of sitting at His feet. “Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be take away from her.”

“She has done a beautiful thing to me,” commented Jesus on Mary anointing Him with perfume, and “wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me…. I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

The great art of the church is not the words we put on paper or the paint we put on canvas. What words of grace we say, what acts of justice we do, what little kindnesses we show along the way, and the quiet, unpretentious ways we go about loving God and loving people, these are the Last Suppers and the Sistine Chapels and the Pietàs.

“The more I think it over,” said van Gogh, “the more I feel that there is nothing more truly artistic than to love people.”

The more I think it over, so do I.

(*Windows of the Soul*, pp. 201-204)